



February 27, 2020

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Chairman, Homeland Security Committee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member, Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Capito and Peters:

On behalf of the 27,000 Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Field Operations (OFO) employees represented by the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) who are stationed at 328 air, sea and land ports of entry, I am writing to support the introduction of the *Protecting CBP Personnel from Synthetic Opioid Exposure Act*. This bill will help ensure the health and safety of CBP Officers as they fulfill their dual mission of safeguarding American ports by protecting the public from dangerous people and materials, while enhancing the Nation's global and economic competitiveness by enabling legitimate trade and travel.

CBP OFO is the premier DHS component tasked with stemming the nation's opioid epidemic--a crisis that continues to get worse. In a report released on May 10, 2019, by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Minority titled "***Combating the Opioid Epidemic: Intercepting Illicit Opioids at Ports of Entry***", CBP Officers at the ports of entry were found to "play a key role in stopping opioids and that CBP has significant shortages of Port Officers that may be compromising efforts to seize additional opioids before they can reach U.S. communities."

The smuggling of fentanyl and other opioids has increased markedly. According to the report, "between 2013 and 2017, approximately 25,405 pounds, or 88% of all opioids seized by CBP, were seized at ports of entry. The amount of fentanyl seized at the ports of entry increased by 159% from 459 pounds in 2016 to 1,189 pounds in 2017." In 2019, CBP Officers seized a total of 2,560 pounds of fentanyl, an increase of 46.6 percent from FY 2018. On January 26, 2019, CBP OFO made their biggest fentanyl seizure ever, capturing nearly 254 pounds of the deadly synthetic opioid at the Nogales port of entry. It is estimated that CBP Officers seized enough fentanyl to kill 57 million people. That's more than the combined population of the states of Illinois, New York and Pennsylvania. The street value for the fentanyl was over \$102 million.

According to the DEA, just two milligrams of fentanyl is considered a lethal dose. CBP Officers need to be protected against potential synthetic opioid exposure at their work site. The

bill that you are introducing today will ensure that CBP Officers receive appropriate training and personnel protective equipment to handle these deadly narcotics.

NTEU strongly supports this bill that will help protect CBP Officers as they work to protect the American people from the scourge of synthetic opioid addiction that is felt in every state and is a threat to the nation's economic security and well-being.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anthony M. Reardon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anthony" being more prominent and the last name "Reardon" following in a similar style.

Anthony M. Reardon
National President