

**TESTIMONY**  
**OF**  
**RYAN HAMPTON**  
**ADDICTION RECOVERY ADVOCATE**  
**BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**  
**UNITED STATES SENATE**  
**DECEMBER 12, 2023**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee: My name is Ryan Hampton. I'm an advocate and person proudly in recovery from opioid use disorder. The story of my opioid addiction is not unique. Millions upon millions of Americans have experienced the very same pain and misery I have at the hands of corporate criminals. I just happen to be one of the lucky few who survived.

Today, I'm using my voice as a survivor and advocate committed to the recovery community. I'm here to call for true accountability and justice for corporate crime, and to highlight the urgent need for action at the Department of Justice toward corporate criminals. The latest available data shows a staggering decline of white-collar prosecutions at the DOJ. Just 90 corporate crime cases were brought forward in 2021, that's less than half of the average annual number of corporate crime prosecutions in the previous 25 years. This was the lowest number of corporate prosecutions since tracking began during the Reagan administration.

The notion that certain executives at select companies are simply "too big to jail" has caused tremendous harm to American citizens and has eroded the public's trust in our institutions.

My painful, near-death experience at the hands of pharmaceutical companies illustrates how dire this problem is. From the 1990s to the 2010s, a tidal wave of pharmaceutical opioids crashed down on this country, drowning thousands of communities in an unprecedented volume of pills that caused dependence, addiction, and death. Like so many, I had to learn this the hard way. I was prescribed an absurd dose for an absurd amount of time by licensed doctors who made scant mention of serious side-effects. After I became addicted, doctors continued re-filling my prescriptions—until one day they didn't. At my most sick and desperate, I was cut-off and

left to fend for myself, without any referral for treatment. Instead of being seen as a patient who needed help, I was now treated as a liability, and faced with prejudice and shame.

What truly stuns me is that while all of this was going on, federal prosecutors at the Department of Justice had already opened multiple investigations into several pharmaceutical companies, from Purdue Pharma, which manufactured the medications; to McKesson, which distributed the medications; and pharmacies like Wal-Mart, which dispensed the medications—medications that were approved by the FDA under false and deceptive pretenses. The truth of this fraud and deception was out there, but I had no way of knowing.

I often think about why so many of us learned about the true nature of these pain relievers after it was far too late. After we were addicted, after we were sick and shivering in withdrawal, after we had lost everything, after people were incarcerated for their addictions, after our friends and loved ones died.

I'm not here today to only demand justice and retribution for corporate crimes. But I believe these waves of pain and despair can be prevented, not only by full prosecution under the law, but through transparency and public awareness. The Corporate Crime Database Act would require the DOJ to collect, analyze, and publish comprehensive data on federal corporate criminal enforcement actions. That's an important start. By making these enforcement actions publicly available, the public would be better informed about the products they purchase and use. A balance of deterrence and transparency can prevent future disasters and spare others from what I experienced.

I'd like to talk more about deterrence today and highlight the fact that white-collar corporate criminals are rarely held accountable in this country. Though numerous pharmaceutical companies have pled guilty to major federal crimes, and settled multi-billion-dollar lawsuits,

justice has still not materialized for victims. The simple fact is this: the more opioids flooded communities, the richer they became. Without enforcement and deterrence, these executives had zero incentive to change their business model.

People at corporations made the decision to break the law, and many remain unapologetic and openly defiant. The Sackler family, for example, could not give a clear answer on whether they feel responsibility or even whether they're sorry for their actions. It seems that the wealthy get off scot-free or with a slap on the wrist, offered sweetheart deals and offered non-prosecution agreements. The most they expect is a measly fine, in what amounts to rounding errors in their enormous profits, chalked up as the cost of doing business.

These powerful companies knowingly defrauded the government and misinformed the public. Senators, these are felonies. Where I'm from, if you commit a felony, you get punished for it. But if you run a big pharma corporation, it appears that wealth and power grant your entry into a parallel system of justice. This parallel system for the wealthy and powerful generates cynicism and erodes faith in our institutions. A society that does not own and face up to its crimes is doomed to repeat them. That is why families like the Sacklers must be fully investigated, indicted, and prosecuted, with transparency by the DOJ, to the full extent of federal law—for the lives they cut short, the communities they tore apart, and the families they destroyed.

America deserves better than this. My community deserves better than this. And we are better than this. Thank you.

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