

Senator Hirono Questions for the Record for the February 4, 2025, Hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee Entitled “The Poisoning of America: Fentanyl, its Analogues, and the Need for Permanent Class Scheduling.”

QUESTIONS FOR Bridgette Norring

Education in Schools on the Dangers of Fentanyl

During the hearing, I asked what role organizations like the Victims of Illicit Drugs (VOID) and the Devin J. Norring Foundation can provide in educating children in our schools about the dangers of illicit drugs. I appreciate your answer during the hearing, and would like to hear more about your views on the subject.

QUESTIONS:

1. Could you elaborate on what impediments organizations such as yours have experienced in educating children about the dangers of illicit drugs, and how the federal government could support the prevention efforts of organizations such as yours?

Thank you, Senator Hirono, for allowing me to expand upon my answer to your question from the Honorable Senate Judiciary Committee’s Hearing; The Poisoning of America: Fentanyl, its Analogues, and the Need for Permanent Class Scheduling.

Senator Hirono, you asked me why schools are reluctant to allow education to be taught in the classroom concerning the fentanyl crisis that has claimed far too many teens and young adults. I cannot speak for others across the country. I can only speak from my experience in working with the schools.

My family and I began working with our local and county law enforcement officials, local recovery centers, community members, churches, and the Hastings United Way shortly after Devin died in 2020. We launched the One Pill Can Kill Campaign and brought our community together for numerous evening events.

When sitting down with our former Superintendent, law enforcement, and fellow planners, we were given a long list of excuses as to why we were not welcome into the schools during the school day. They are as follows:

- Parents may not want their children to have this education. They may believe that their children would never experiment or use drugs.
- Parents are doing a good enough job at home having preventative conversations with their children.
- Parents don’t believe what happened to Devin could happen to their children.
- We see something, say something, now what? What comes next? The conversation ends and nothing changes.
- Awareness and educational events should be done in the evening so parents can be involved.
- When asked about extra credit being given to encourage evening attendance with students, we were informed that doing so would violate Board of Education rules.

- Board of Education dictates the curriculum for the school year, and they do not leave enough room to fit this in.
- The presentations are given by people who have no background in education; lived experience is not considered educational.
- They did not want to create fear-mongering amongst the students – even though 8 teens and young adults had lost their lives at this point.
- There is a huge distrust amongst the community and members of law enforcement.
- Students may not relate to the presentation given since it does not affect them, their families, or peers.

Senator Hirono, I was invited to the first DEA National Family Summit on Fentanyl three years ago. We were informed by the DEA that they would love to connect with our schools. We were encouraged to connect our school officials with our DEA Outreach Coordinator. I did all that. For over a year, Senator Hirono, we tried to get our schools here in Hastings, Minnesota to present their One Pill Can Kill presentation to students.

We were eventually told by school staff who at one point in time that the DEA did come to our local school and met with the faculty. The DEA presented to the school faculty their One Pill Can Kill presentation. We were told off record by several teachers that ONE person, a DEI Coordinator spoke for the entire school by saying that the presentation is not welcome in the school because “it would create Chinese and Mexican hate towards those students”. Senator Hirono, our DEA if they had been notified of this concern assured my family that they could remove all mention of China and the Mexican Cartels involvement from the presentation. Senator Hirono, in speaking with a now former law enforcement official and explaining this concern to him, said something that will forever stick with me. He said, “Do you mean to tell me that the DEA is willing to come into our schools and talk to the kids and the Superintendent and this one person are keeping them out?” I replied, “yes”. He then stated that the Dakota County Drug Task Force “had been begging for the last five years to be allowed into the schools to have this vital conversation. A conversation that would’ve educated my oldest daughter, Hayley. A conversation that would’ve educated Devin, and in turn would’ve brought this topic to my radar much sooner rather than after it cost Devin his life. A conversation that could’ve potentially saved Natalia, Tyler, and the other teens who died after Devin.”

Senator Hirono, I can continue, but all these excuses hold no water in my book. An educated student, in my opinion, is better equipped to make positive life-saving choices when and if they are ever placed in a situation in which these lethal substances are placed in front of them. We owe it to our children to give them this life-saving knowledge so that they can live their best life and not end up in an early grave like my son and countless others.

Senator, we have lost so many teens here in Minnesota. I know that it is the same in your state as well. Children as young as 12 have lost their lives in Minnesota to something that could’ve been prevented if our law enforcement, people with lived experience, and educators were allowed to share this information.

Senator, we are still losing children and we will continue losing more lives until there is some reform where these social media apps are concerned. We are still hearing parents AFTER it is

too late and their children are gone, that they had never heard of fentanyl – let alone knew that their children were able to obtain the lethal substance that took their lives off of social media apps, primarily Snapchat.

It is crucial Senator Hirono that we begin these conversations at an early age. It is crucial Senator that our kids and parents know the risks and dangers that are out there not just in their communities, but also on apps like Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to expand upon my answer.

Respectfully,
Bridgette Norring
Devin J. Norring's Mom – Forever 19