

February 17, 2025

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Durbin,

RE: Halt Fentanyl ACT

I am writing in regards to the **Halt Fentanyl Act**, I am begging and pleading that no amendments will be done to this act. Please move forward and make a difference for those who are still with us today. Our hearts are breaking each and everyday with this lethal drug in the United States. Our Law Enforcement, Medical and People of America need to take action immediately please.

My little brother Joey A Keating lost his life on January 10, 2024 to Toxic Fentanyl and Cocaine at the age of 38 years in Merrillville, Indiana at Country Inn and Suites on Ohio Street.

Joey was a brilliant individual and was unbelievably smart in so many ways. He suffered with addiction for many years but he would always come around the mulberry bush and be Joey again. The people who loved and cared for him the most were his worst enemies at most times. He had gone to rehab many times, however, due to financial issues, he was only able to go to State funded facilities, and most of them only treated addiction and did not treat the mental aspect. I remember him calling from a facility in Elgin, Illinois stating he was being kicked out because of his anger and the way he was speaking to the staff. To me addiction and mental health go hand in hand and to them they only focused on addiction. This was the last place Joey agreed to go to in 2022. Extremely, difficult to receive help in any way with addiction in this Country. It's hard enough to get the person to commit and cheer them on, and it's even harder to actually find a facility to attend in a small window they are willing to go.

On January 10, 2024 when the call was received stating Joey was gone I crumbled. I could not believe Joey was gone forever and at this point the cause of death was unknown. On January 9, 2024 this was his check out date at the hotel, however, the staff at the hotel opened his hotel door and his cat was going to run so they simply closed the door. The hotel supposedly locked the hotel key out of the system, so he would have to

go to the front desk and pay. In some ways, I do not believe this was done because they have no computer system showing the keycard was locked. And why would the hotel let an individual stay a whole another night without calling police for a wellness check or removing him from the room. This part does not add up either to me. The police reached to my Mom and asked if he was known to do illicit drugs, my Mom stated yes however it was unknown exactly what he was taking. The detective stated he would have to wait for the toxicology report to come back to see the cause of death and what the Coroner ruled the death.

It is so hard to even grasp my brother being found dead in a hotel room, and another investigating the situation and trying to comprehend what actually happened. On January 11, 2025, we traveled to the hotel to pick up his belongings as well as his cat. When we arrived at the hotel we were greeted by the manager and I would like to add she would not let one other speak to us. Upon entering the room, the cat was nowhere to be found, and then was spotted between the closed window. Someone had gone into the room and put the cat through the window. Completely heartbreaking that anyone could do this to a living thing and especially during these circumstances. The room was a complete mess and all materials of value were removed from the room by the manager as if he had no family who would be coming to pick up his things. In the room there were no drugs or drug paraphernalia found by us, the coroner or the detective. The only thing recovered was two prescription bottles that were empty which were Adderrell and Klonopin. There was narcan found within his jacket that was thrown on the side of the bed along and his three phones that were taken for evidence. No sign of other drugs taken while in the room or powder substances found on furniture in the room. The detective stated they took the three phones from the scene but had no probable cause to search the phones without the toxicology report. I said no probable cause my brother was found dead in a hotel room. How is there no probable cause? My brother's vehicle at the time was not searched either.

At this point, so many red flags were going into my head and I just couldn't let this go. This was my brother who was 38 years old and to them he was nothing. Joey had a lengthy record and anything and everything he did wrong he was disciplined in the court system in several states. However, it was never recognized there were other issues going on and if he did not have family how would he survive when he was released from being incarcerated. Solely based on his past I truly believe the Merrillville Police Department he was nothing but a number just as all the other deaths they have dealt with involving drugs. I kept repeatedly stating you need to check into this that something is not right here, and someone left him to die. The reason I received everyday from them was they had to wait on the toxicology report. In the meantime, I continued my own investigation but being just a regular civilian you are not able to get phone records,

anything from meta which is part of Facebook and all of this needed because social media is the biggest drug dealing place there is along with many other social media sites. I just felt like road block after block was being met, and each and everyday I emailed the detective with paperwork to be completed in order to obtain the records. None of the paperwork was ever sent in by the Merrillville Police Department in order to retrieve any of the records.

Finally, on January 19, 2025 I received the autopsy report and toxicology report from the Lake County Coroner's Office. Once I received the report I crumbled because I knew Joey did not die from pill bottles in the room. Of course it was checked accidental death and cause of death was toxic fentanyl and cocaine. At this point, I reached to the police department again but they stated they did not receive report at this time, hard to believe right but I had a copy of it. The police department finally received the report days later and simply stated the Coroner ruled the death accidental there is no further investigation at this time. My heart screamed at this point and just could not believe to them this was just another number to count for and to me this was my little brother his life matters and I am not stopping at this point. I started sending all screenshots from FB to investigators starting on January 3, 2025 my brother was going back and forth with an individual on here and 7 days later he was found dead. This individual knew exactly where my brother was located, and even the room number. Joey never let anybody know his location because of paranoia at all times. It turned out the girl who frequented the hotel often was also associated with this male who was speaking to Joey on FB. This individual's mother had died of an overdose many years prior and my brother had made a comment about her death which was not nice, and days later my brother is dead. This was nothing to the detective and simply stated they were just having a regular argument, I did not agree with this one bit.

After receiving the toxicology report the detective stated he would open the phones to see what he could find. The whole time I was begging and pleading to open the phones, I did not know the code to any of them. Opening the phones supposedly took until May of 2024 to open. During all of my emails and phone calls with this detective I kept stating someone was in the room with him, he was not there alone. He kept asking why I felt that way, and I said because you would not be doing the drugs alone. I followed my heart and gut and just kept saying something is not right here, you need to investigate some many other individuals who are dying during this whole time and you could be working on saving their lives. The detective called to meet in order for me to pick up the phones in May of 2024 and stated there were only screenshots found and nothing criminally found. I personally did not believe him one bit, and traveled there to pick up the phones. When I met with him he handed me a property form to sign in order to release the phones. On the property form were three phones along with female

underwear which were gray and white. I froze at this point and could not even believe this. I did not ask any questions about the underwear while I was there because I just couldn't in my heart even face this. I asked all the questions listed in my journal, and of course no answers received or no foul play. Unbelievable right, this was my brother and we all have family and friends and this can happen to anyone at any time, I was not given up. I asked about one individual in particular by the name of R [REDACTED] S [REDACTED], he stated nothing was found with that name on it. This individual's name was huge because he is the step father of the individual who was conversing with Joey on Facebook and he was also the husband of the deceased Mom of the overdose my brother was speaking of on FB with his step son. The detective stated there was nothing. I asked about the bottle of Klonopin that was missing that was filled on January 7th at the Walgreens in Lansing, Illinois, he stated we only found the receipt and not the bottle. I said there was nothing in the phones of the prescription being sold for other drugs on the street. He further stated nothing was found.

I left the police department that day in such disgust and thought about what I am going to do. My heart is completely shattered but I have to keep fighting for my brother and all of the others still out there all their lives matter. It takes a village to go up against all of this from all different points. The medical staff continue to hand out prescription drugs like candy without even seeing a patient. My brother was prescribed ninety prescriptions from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023 and was seen in the office one time and one televisit online with his doctor. All of the medicine was covered by medicaid during this whole time and the milligrams of the prescription were changed often. I have the 911 call from this day, the police report, the autopsy, and the toxicology report. All of the information from the phone, all pictures and addresses of drug dealers, all paperwork from the hotel in which they double charged for many weeks, all medicine prescribed along with doctor's names. The file is huge along with all correspondence with the Coroner and Merrillville Police Department.

Later in the month of May I decided to try and open Joey's phones to see if I could do anything. All of sudden one of the phones opened and was able to receive much information in this phone through text messages received and messages received within FB that were still there. The first FB message I came across is where Joey sold nineteen Klonopin to an individual on January 7, 2025 for dope it read. I am not sure what he received on this day but I have the individuals name as well as this individuals's girlfriend's name who was also spoken through on FB messenger. On January 9, 2025 Joey received a message from R [REDACTED] S [REDACTED] who was a person I inquired about with the detective with verbiage stating the drugs were left on the battery of vehicle. This particular person was after my brother because of all of the comments left on FB by his step son. On January 10, 2025 my brother was found dead. This person took my

brother's life in a split second, and the detective stated he found nothing in all three phones and I found all of this on the phone.

I have put my brother's name everywhere and with every memorial there is, he will never be forgotten and others will be aware of his murder. My brother did not know he was going to die, and this individual poisoned my brother and took his life. These police state how much integrity they have at the Merrillville Police Department, do they know what integrity means. Integrity is honesty, and clearly this detective has no honesty if he can lie about what was found in the phones.

If everyone does not get on board this issue will never come to end due to everyone working against each other, instead of taking the time with the lost ones family and really figuring it out. Every single person's life matters no matter what the issue may be. These are unlicensed pharmacists working the streets and they are killing everyone in the United States of America. Doctor's are to blame in the drug abuse issue as well, they are prescribing opioids like candy to every individual which then causes addiction and they are trying to feel like their first high, so they go to the streets for a better high. Come on people wake up and realize innocent lives are being lost every minute and families are suffering the losses each everyday. I am not only fighting for my brother but every individual going through this and who has lost their lives. They are never coming back, so we are fighting for the lives who are still here on Earth with us.

All of the people are being poisoned, and the poisoner is to blame for their death. Their death is at the hands of another individual and this is a homicide.

Merrillville Police Department and many other police departments should be ashamed of themselves on how they handle these deaths. Be honest and take your oath to the heart and make a difference. We are all in this together and I sent much needed evidence to fight the case, so do your part and make a difference. The Coroner's need to stop labeling this as accidental, this is not accidental because they ingested the drug they were poisoned just like death of alcohol is written as poisoned alcohol. Open your eyes this is real and so many lives are being taken in this world in split seconds and nothing is being done.

I will say I give many smiles to the few police departments who are actually trying to make a difference, some are actually taking this seriously. This could be anybody at any time and we are suffering.

I loved my brother each and every day and worried about him every minute. There was only so much I could do for him, and some days I had to be harder than others because I knew if I coddled him this was not helping him. Do you ever sit and think how hard this is to do for a person you love so very much and to watch them go through this? I knew him as a different person rather than what others may have thought of him. I will never stop fighting and his picture and name will be everywhere. This in itself kills my soul to see his picture on billboards, walls with his name or signs with his picture and name. It hurts so bad but I will never give up the fight of Joey A. Keating forever38 and always my little brother. I will continue to fight for every single person who deserves justice in this, stand up and voice. Fentanyl should have never made it to the streets here, and now you want to halt it. Wake up, this is a huge issue in the US, and we need to fight this together!!!!!!

Please do not Halt the Fentanyl act, this drug needs to be a Scheduled I, this is a lethal drug and is taking a full generation from our Country. Having the borders open only made it easier to silently murder all of our loved ones. This hurts beyond words can express, and it will take a village from many aspects to slow this down. When someone is murdered by a weapon, the weapon is searched for in order to prosecute the case, how is being murdered by drugs any different. Many police sure do not chase the drugs to see where they are stemming from, they just look at our loved one as an addict. These drug dealers are taking full advantage of the individual's addiction and killing them one by one.

Please vote with your heart and realize what this lethal drug of Fentanyl is doing to the American People. Our loved ones are never coming back, and so many are in jeopardy as we speak.

Thank you for listening and always use your heart

Jenny Keating
Joey Keating's Sister

I miss you so much, you were my childhood best friend and the only other person to relate to growing up. I will miss you forever and will always look to the sky.

**Joey A Keating's Life Mattered with Everyone's life who were
"Silently Murdered"**

