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## Letter for Congress

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Arnie Fritz [REDACTED]@gmail.com&gt;

Fri, Jan 24, 2025 at 9:46 AM

To: Andrea Thomas [REDACTED]@voicesforawareness.com&gt;

My name is Arnie Fritz and I currently live in Vermont.

On 3/5/23, my son Joseph Lewis died of an acute fentanyl poisoning in Pennsylvania. His death was ruled a homicide. There was enough fentanyl in his system to kill 3 people according to the coroner.

Joseph was 20 years old and had a bright future ahead of him. He was a kind, caring, compassionate and funny young man.

He started using marijuana as a young teenager and progressed to opiates. Joey had been in rehabilitation three times prior to his death.

Two weeks prior to his death we had a very honest conversation about addiction and he agreed to try another rehab by the name of Teen Challenge which we had heard has a great success rate. Previous facilities had no effect on him at all. He may have gained some knowledge regarding addiction, but there were no behavioral changes. In fact, he was taught that once an addict, always an addict and I strongly disagree.

Once these people have ingested a product that contains fentanyl, their chances of "kicking" the habit are slim. Fentanyl is so addictive and destructive.

My son turned into a person that was so far from the young man I had raised it was absolutely heartwrenching. The lying and stealing was such a constant struggle between us. You want to see the good in your child; you want to believe them; but you can no longer trust them. Hiding your purse and valuables in so many places and so many times that your own mental health begins to suffer.

Joey wanted to get clean so badly. He once said to me "Mom, this is so hard mentally and physically, I don't want this for me and I don't want this for you", To watch him go through this agony was horrifying.

He did not have the courage to go to Teen Challenge and in 2 weeks, the drug use escalated to the point that I think he thought he was invincible. Just needed to feel numb again.

Our country desperately needs better rehabilitation facilities that are qualified and affordable for ALL age groups. And, of course we need to stop these drugs from entering our country and create laws that are easier to prosecute drug dealers.

I think the families who have lost members of their family to this drug epidemic could go on and on with suggestions, but we are relying on our voted officials to carry the torch forward in this fight.

Thank you for your time in reading this.