

A Mother's Plea: Addressing the Illicit Fentanyl Crisis

In Memory of Luke Benson

On August 23, 2021, I lost my beloved son, Luke Benson, to illicit fentanyl pressed into Xanax. Luke battled Substance Use Disorder (SUD) for three long years. As a family, we did everything in our power to get him the right treatment and provide unwavering support. Despite our efforts, Luke faced his struggles mostly alone, and his battle ended tragically at the age of twenty-five.

Luke was an extraordinary individual with three college degrees. He ran a business and worked diligently every day, showing a level of perseverance that was truly admirable. He loved to travel and cherished his family, including his brothers, grandparents, friends, and other loved ones. His life was taken far too soon, and most days, I find it impossible to process this overwhelming loss.

Since Luke's passing, I have dedicated myself to advocating against illicit drugs. I am determined to prevent other parents from experiencing the same unbearable pain. Over the past four years, the influx of these dangerous substances into our country has continued unabated, claiming countless lives. It is the responsibility of the United States Government to protect its citizens, and it is imperative that they act.

Illicit fentanyl should be classified as a weapon of mass destruction due to its devastating impact. I urgently plead with the US government to establish comprehensive treatment programs tailored to address the specific challenges posed by illicit fentanyl. Additionally, there must be stringent accountability for dealers and the countries supplying these lethal drugs. Local authorities should impose harsher penalties, and cases like Luke's should be treated with the gravity they deserve, ensuring that appropriate action is taken.

I was told to "SAVE MYSELF THE HEARTACHE" of pursuing justice with the Chicago Police Department, which felt like a cruel slap in the face. My son deserved better and so did all the other victims of this crisis. We must demand change and work tirelessly to prevent further tragedies. Only through concerted efforts can we hope to put an end to this epidemic and save countless lives.

In memory of my son, Luke Benson, and all those lost to this crisis, I implore the authorities to act now. The time for change is long overdue.

Thank you, Lukes Mom,

Jeanine Bothell