

September 2023

Dear Senators,

My name is Jody Wintheiser. On January 4, 2014, my world ended when I discovered my only child dead from an opiate overdose.

Samantha "Sammy" Grace Medinger was beautiful, kind, sassy, funny and wildly creative. In January of this year, I will be 10 years into my life sentence of grief. Anyone who says "it" gets better is lying. Sammy has missed weddings of her friends, holding their babies, and living the life she should have had if it hadn't ended at 24 years of age.

Since then, I have lost two more bonus children -- dear friends of Sammy's who had nurtured and supported me through this awful journey. They accompanied me to the sentencing of one of the people who supplied my daughter with drugs on the day she died. They both sat in front of me, sobbing at the loss of their friend. They both have since died of overdoses themselves. The last death was in 2022, and it was Fentanyl. There is a new killer in town, and incredibly, it is even more vicious than heroin.

I now have a memorial garden in my front yard for my daughter and a memorial garden in the backyard for my bonus daughter. Her two small children (my adopted grandchildren) helped me pick out stones and ornaments for their Mom's garden. They were 4 and 8 years old when she relapsed and took her last shot. Please pass this bill, so I don't have to build any more gardens.

Sincerely, Jody Wintheiser

