

Bridgette L. Norring
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03/08/2022

Honorable Senator Karla Bigham
District 54
Minnesota State Senate
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2411
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Honorable Senator Karla Bigham:

I would like to start by saying, thank you, Senator Bigham for creating this bill and those who support it. My family and our Hastings community appreciates everything you, and Rep. Jurgens are doing and have done by joining us in raising awareness while also creating bills such as SF3173.

My name is Bridgette Norring. On April 4th, 2020, my family suffered the tragic loss of my 19-year old son, Devin Norring. A pill that was advertised on Snapchat as Percocet sold to Devin and his friend turned out to be 100% pure fentanyl. The friend he was with knew Devin was in need of medical attention; he never called any of us for help or even attempted to call 911. Instead, he locked Devin's bedroom door, used the bathroom, and told Devin's younger brother, Caden that Devin was sleeping. It was Caden who would pick the lock the following day and discover his brother he looked up to, unresponsive in his bed.

My son, wasn't looking to get high. He was looking to relieve himself of pain caused by several cracked teeth that he was supposed to have had fixed on April 2nd, 2020. However, the recent COVID lockdown saw all dental and medical appointments cancelled, including his. As a parent, I don't condone what Devin and his friend did. My son didn't deserve to be deceived to death. Our children should be able to learn from their mistakes, not die from them.

Every single dream my husband, Tom and I had for our son was erased in the blink of an eye. Every single goal, Devin had set for himself was erased on April 4th, 2020. He'll never get to see his dream of going to school in California to pursue his music career come to fruition. Devin will never get to drive the car he saved up by working hard full-time at Factory Motor Parts. Devin never got to experience voting or reaching life's milestone of turning 21.

The remaining chapters of our lives will always have a sorrowful cloud hanging overhead where Devin's absence will forever be felt. His siblings, Hayley and Caden will feel that loss longer than

Tom and I. Hayley is expecting her first child May, 9th, 2022. Devin will never meet his future niece or any future nieces or nephews. He no longer is here to mentor, Caden as Caden follows in his older brother's footsteps with his love of music. Today, March 8th, is my husband's birthday; March 11th is Caden's birthday; the loss of not having Devin here for even the simplest of days is a pain that I cannot put words to.

Like many parents who've had to bury their children, we didn't know what fentanyl is. We had no idea how easy it was to find these pills via Snapchat and other social media apps. There was no mention in any of our city or school communications. I wish I had seen even one correspondence in regard to fentanyl before Devin lost his life. If we don't know, how can we as parents educate our children and prevent them from losing their lives?

We know that our kids will experiment. In 2013, the National Institute of Health conducted a nationwide survey on Drug Use and Health¹. From that survey it was determined that 40% of American 12th grade high school children have experimented with drugs. I would be safe to say, that if that survey was conducted today, that 40% would be even higher; that is both frightening and heartbreaking to say.

Who is educating our children on how experimentation can lead to their death? We owe it to our children to educate them both in and outside of school. We should be giving them the proper tools and resources we have available as early as possible so that they can find an alternative method when facing life's obstacles instead of seeking out these lethal substances. At the rate that fentanyl is killing our youth we must begin teaching about the dangers of substance misuse at an early age, preferably annually. We need to begin educating them the signs of an overdose; how to use Narcan; the protections Steve's Law = the Good Samaritan Law provides when calling for help; where to go for help if they or their friend finds themselves misusing drugs. We should be educating them on the dangers lurking out there in the form of drug dealers lying in wait for them on social media apps such as Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook (Meta) etc...

Hastings, MN, didn't just lose my son, Devin. In the 2 years since Devin was poisoned to death Hastings has lost 19-year old, Natalia Arreguin, 19-year old, Tyler Kavitz, 20 year-old, Corianda 'Cora' Anderson, and several others as a result of the counterfeit fentanyl pills. All of them were recent 2019 Hastings High School students. Jose Ellis Freedy, 21 (Farmington), Travis Gustavson, 21 (Mankato). Madyson Warner, 15 (Oakdale), Grant Simek, 19 (Maple Grove). That's just a small portion of the Minnesota families we've come to know. We need help!

Part of my family's advocacy found us reaching out to our United Way of Hastings last year. From that meeting, Mari Mellick and Jane Neumiller Bustad created our Fentanyl Education Task Force. In the summer 2021, we sat down with two different groups of students in Hastings. We gave them the floor so that we could have a better understanding of what our kids are facing and why they are turning to illicit drugs as a coping mechanism. It was very eye-opening. Our kids in Hastings want to know what is killing their friends. They want to know why the schools aren't talking about it. They want to know how a drug in such a small quantity can be so lethal; how to stop it; and how to get

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their friends the help they need. They expressed how they are tired of attending funerals for their friends who have died from illicit fentanyl.

According to the MN Dept of Health, there were 654 opioid-caused overdose deaths from 2019-2020, 593(90%)² involved synthetic opioids such as fentanyl. Devin is one of those 593. I can assure you my son had more value alive than being a number on a piece of paper that most people don't concern themselves with unless they are in my shoes fighting to save the next person's child from becoming a casualty. Our children and loved ones are being deceived or rather poisoned to death by counterfeit pills and powders that contain the lethal substance known as illicit fentanyl every day. Like my son, many are not getting a second chance to become educated on the dangers that are out there because they are dying the first time experimenting. We have lost children in Minnesota as young as 13 to these illicit substances.

This bill is crucial in ensuring our children are given factual information upfront so that they have every available tool and resource available to them if ever presented with the situation of taking something that isn't prescribed to them. Our children are our future. These are future voters, doctors, lawyers, Senators, judges, Mayors, law enforcement officials, military personnel, and the list goes on. We need to protect our future before it is too late. I believe in my heart that SF3173's passing will help do just that; it will ensure we reach our children before it is too late.

One of the last promises, I made to Devin as I held him one last time was that I would do something. I didn't know what, but I was going to do something. That something comes in form of me raising as much awareness through sharing my son's story in hopes of saving just one life, more would be preferred. Please help my family and my fellow Minnesotan Angel families fulfill that promise so that another family never has to experience this nightmare we live every day without our children.

Sincerely,



Bridgette L. Norring

Citations:

1. Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings
<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHresultsPDFWHTML2013/Web/NSDUHresults2013.pdf>
2. Fentanyl and Fentanyl Analogues https://knowthedangers.com/synthetic-opioids/?fbclid=IwAR1jR_syXNVxbNdg8jTKj1yGRrqrjMPuJxuum607Y77CaV5uCO1bqbEDQ8