Hundreds of Bereaved Families on Capitol Hill and National Mall This Weekend With Message to Candidates: 'Say Fentanyl'

United Against Fentanyl brings “Say Fentanyl” to Capitol Hill Friday, followed by the national "Walk for Lives" event Saturday.



UAF National Walk for Lives, July 11, San Fransisco

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 21, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Bereaved families will come to the U.S. Capitol on Friday with one request for every candidate running for the Senate and House this November: "Say fentanyl."

Fentanyl remains at the center of America’s drug overdose crisis. In 2024, nearly 48,000 Americans died from overdose or poisoning involving synthetic opioids such as fentanyl. Families arriving from nearly 40 states say they have watched an entire campaign season without hearing candidates name it.

> My children are alive, but I know hundreds whose children are not. Their children mattered and so do the tens of thousands who are alive this morning but will die next year.”
>
> *Paul Martin-Founder, United Against Fentanyl*

“It baffles me how the greatest killer of young Americans gets so little attention," said Paul Martin, founder and CEO of United Against Fentanyl (UAF). “These families are not asking candidates to agree with any policy, they are asking them talk about it. You cannot campaign on protecting American families without naming the thing that is killing America's children. These candidates have six weeks to change that.”

On Friday, Sept. 25, families will spend the day on Capitol Hill in state delegations — Ohio families with Ohio offices, Texas families with Texas offices — hand-delivering constituent letters written by a parent who buried a child, and a declaration for policy change.

They will gather in front of the Capitol at 9:30 a.m. holding photographs of those they lost while a bereaved parent reads UAF's five policy priorities aloud.

Since launching its policy platform this year, UAF has generated nearly 10,000 letters to Senate and House members, 90% from bereaved family members.

United Against Fentanyl is nonpartisan and endorses no candidate or party.

“There is no version of this crisis that belongs to one side,” Martin said. “Fentanyl has taken children from every kind of family in every state, in districts represented by both parties. Saying ‘fentanyl’ costs a candidate nothing, but it does tell over five million grieving parents, siblings, grandparents, and other loved ones that someone in Washington is paying attention.”

“My child had a name, a life and a future," said Misti Ingersoll. of Kilgore, Texas. "Fentanyl took that future. I’m asking every candidate in America to say the word fentanyl."

UAF's five policy priorities call for a victims’ fund and National Opioid Crisis Memorial financed by seized cartel assets, evidence-based prevention education for every American student, treatment made easier to access than illegal drugs, sustained support for long-term recovery, and a global treaty to disrupt the synthetic drug supply at its source. The declaration names no bill or party.

An estimated 1 million parents today are grieving the recent loss of a child. Approximately 10 high school students die every week. Some struggled with addiction and could not find treatment; others took a single pill they believed was medicine.

“My children are alive, but I know hundreds whose children aren't,” Martin said. “ Their children mattered and so do the tens of thousands who are alive this morning but could likely die next year."

The families return Saturday, Sept. 26, for the national Walk for Lives on the National Mall at 9:30 a.m., carrying photographs of those they lost.

The gathering follows UAF’s July 11 mobilization, when 110 Walk for Lives events were held in a single day, drawing over 9,000 participants across 38 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, alongside more than 500 community partners and Drug Enforcement Administration field divisions.

Saturday evening, UAF will convene the first International Summit on Synthetic Drugs at Georgetown University’s Capitol Campus. Speakers include Vanda Felbab-Brown of the Brookings Institution; Regina LaBelle and Richard Baum, former acting directors of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy; Jim Crotty, former DEA official; Greg Gatjanis, Former Associate Director, U.S. Treasury OFAC; and Ben Westhoff, author of “Fentanyl, Inc.”

The summit is free with advance registration required.

MEDIA: Credentialed press are invited to all three events. Interviews are available in advance with bereaved parents from across the country. Details are at unitedagainstfentanyl.org.

United Against Fentanyl is a nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C. and working to address the fentanyl and greater synthetic-drug crisis through innovative, bold, and effective initiatives.

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