

Rep. Jake Auchincloss, Opening Remarks
Fentanyl Policy Working Group Meeting #1
As prepared for delivery
6.27.24

We have all joined this working group because we have seen the devastating effects of fentanyl in our districts. Children watching from the backseat as their parents overdose & die in the front seat. Grandparents trying to rescue their children from addiction while raising their grandchildren. First responders overwhelmed & demoralized. On behalf of the hundred thousand Americans poisoned to death every year – and their families – we are resolved to take action by interdicting the supply of fentanyl directly at its source: the Chinese mainland.

This working group is firmly focused on supply, not on demand. There is good & important work being done on education, primary prevention, harm reduction, and rehabilitation – I support that work. I see in my district, as I’m sure you all see in yours, the benefits of that work and the potential for directing opioid settlement funds towards scaling it. But that is not the mandate of this working group – we are focused on interdicting supply.

Within the supply interdiction mandate, we are focused on China, not Mexico. I am a Member of Congressman Dan Crenshaw’s Task Force to Combat Mexican Drug Cartels, which has made substantial strides in elucidating and addressing the Drug Cartels’ function in the fentanyl supply chain. He and I are in regular engagement, and it is both his & my intention that our respective initiatives are in sync. In order to disrupt the synergy between the cartels and the Chinese Communist Party, we must be as collaborative as they are.

For our part, this working group should look at statutory and executive gaps across three domains of Chinese fentanyl trafficking: sanctions, customs, and money laundering. I do not, as yet, have a strong point of view about where those statutory or executive gaps exist across those three domains, or the best way to plug them. I do have a strong point of view that our goal should be bone-crushing leverage against the CCP’s subsidy and facilitation of fentanyl trafficking. Some argue that disrupting Chinese fentanyl exports would simply shift the illicit industry to a different country. I disagree with this defeatism: in its manufacturing bandwidth, in its state capacity, and in its nefarious intent regarding fentanyl, China is unique. Forcing the illicit fentanyl precursor industry to relocate would likely substantially degrade it and would be a good problem to have.

Let me close where I began, with our constituents. They want us to work together, and they want action. Tonight, watching the debate, we’re going to be Republicans and Democrats. But tomorrow, in this working group, we must be lawmakers committed to solutions.