

## Testimony of Molly A. Cain

Thank you, Madame Chair and members of the committee, for inviting me to come and speak out about fentanyl; how it has invaded our communities, devastated families, and how it has become a public health crisis. My name is Molly Cain and I lost my beloved 23-year-old son, Carson, to fentanyl poisoning on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Thank you for allowing me to share his story.

I'd like to begin by painting a picture of who Carson was. Carson had a beautiful soul. He loved deeply, was wise beyond his years, and his heart was true. Carson persevered in the face of adversity. When Carson was six, he was diagnosed with dyslexia. At seven, he was diagnosed with a familial tremor that progressively worsened. At ten years old he watched his healthy father be ravaged by, and ultimately succumb to brain cancer. Carson and his brother took on more responsibility within our family without being prompted or asked.

Carson graduated high school with **both** his high school diploma and his AA degree, and went on to Gonzaga University to further his education. During his college years he was prescribed Xanax for anxiety.

Carson was a genuine and empathetic person who wanted to better the world around him. He'd lend a hand, or an understanding ear, to those in need and did not expect anything in return. He was the shoulder of strength others leaned on,

especially those friends who'd lost a parent. Carson helped to guide them out of the dark abyss they now faced.

During his college years, Carson would plow snow in the early morning hours and, without request or compensation, would stop at the parking lot of a cancer center to clear the lot. When asked why he made that stop, Carson replied, "The patients going for treatment have enough challenges. They don't need one more to navigate." These actions embodied his compassionate and devoted spirit.

At twenty-two, Carson was diagnosed with appendix cancer. After a battery of scans and procedures, it was determined the cancer had not spread but a spot found on his lung needed to be monitored. The anxiety my son had, became elevated and suddenly Covid hit. Carson, feeling immense pressure went to counseling and was given Xanax again. He told me he felt counseling online was impersonal and he was only offered appointments during his working hours. He stopped going.

On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Carson came home for Thanksgiving. He was exhausted. He said he was not sleeping. He had been working long hours and wasn't able to get the rest he needed. He hugged me goodbye and thanked me for a wonderful dinner and said he loved me. The next day, after not hearing from him as I usually would, I called him, with no answer. I went to his home and found my beautiful loving son, on his living room floor, deceased. I can't put into words the guttural

pain of finding Carson dead, and knowing I couldn't save him.

We had to wait almost three months for the toxicology report to find out that fentanyl killed him. During this waiting period we had Carson's phone and he began to receive Snapchat's with pictures of drugs and emoji's from an individual. We dug into Carson's Cash app account and discovered a payment to the same individual the night he passed away. For months, the individual continued to Snapchat pictures of drugs and emojis. The DEA did a sting. The individual served less than 24 hours in jail. I was the one who brought the drug dealer's account to the attention of Snapchat. Snapchat claims they have filters in place that monitor, for such illicit activity. Then why for five months did this individual continue to Snapchat such things, if Snapchat's filters were operational? In my opinion, Snapchat is the courier and provides the getaway for the traffickers of this poison.

In the months, and now years, that have ensued, I have grieved immeasurably. I knew what devastation was after losing my husband, but losing my child has left a gaping hole within my being. The heartache and pain, is gripping. My son bought something thinking it would ease anxiety. A mistake that cost him his life. It was not his intent to die. These individuals who are dying are not overdosing. They are being poisoned.

In the two years since Carson's death, tens of thousands of people have lost their lives to this weapon of mass destruction. Many victims were unknowing.

We need to be educating our children and families alike about fentanyl and its lethal effects. It has been published, that in Seattle, the fentanyl crisis is so bad that the Medical Examiner is running low on storage for the dead bodies. I was told by a DEA agent that we will not see an end to fentanyl in our lifetime. I find these words exceptionally chilling. I never thought my son's photo would be hanging on the DEA's wall as one of the victims of fentanyl. Heartbreakingly, he is a statistic. How many lives must be lost before we start holding the players in this hellish nightmare accountable? We must do more from preventing fentanyl from getting into our country so one more mother, one more family, will not have to be brought to their knees in sorrow. I plead with you to take action.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak.

Molly Cain

## **Summary of Molly A. Cain's testimony**

- **Who was Carson Cain**
- **How did Carson die**
- **How did Snapchat play a role**
- **Public Health Crisis**
- **Accountability for those involved in the manufacturing and trafficking of fentanyl**