

**Written Testimony of Douglas Murray**  
**Hearing Before the House Judiciary Committee**

**May 3, 2024**

---

Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Nadler, and members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

My name is Douglas Murray, and I am an author and journalist. My testimony will focus on my investigative reporting on how the nation's drug crisis has ravaged cities like Philadelphia. Opioids like fentanyl are lethal and omnipresent and killing an unacceptably high number of Americans. Supposedly humane approaches to drug use are prolonging addiction and enabling crime and disorder. These policies simply are not working.

Last month, I released a documentary on America's drug crisis that took me to New York City and Philadelphia. I visited Philly's Kensington neighborhood, home to one of the country's biggest open-air drug markets. The scenes in Kensington were shocking. People passed out or convulsing violently. Needles littering the sidewalks and roads. Addicts receiving treatment at clinics only to shoot up again on the street a short time later. Users of the flesh-rotting drug Xylazine, also known as "tranq," sporting open wounds up and down their bodies.

I have reported from Gaza, Ukraine, North Korea, and northern Nigeria, and I have never seen anything like what I saw in Kensington outside of a war zone. In the same city where today you are convening a hearing of one of the world's greatest legislative bodies, thousands of Philadelphians are living in these wretched conditions. The drug crisis, as my fellow witnesses will discuss, plays a large role in the lawlessness and disorder plaguing Philadelphia and many other great American cities.

Drugs are killing the lifeblood of this country. According to the CDC, there were 107,941 overdose deaths in 2022.<sup>1</sup> That is almost as many as the number of U.S. military deaths during World War I.<sup>2</sup> It is roughly double the number of U.S. military deaths during the entirety of the Vietnam War.<sup>3</sup>

The United States is in the throes of an opioid epidemic. Highly toxic Chinese-made fentanyl, for instance, is pouring across the border with Mexico to be sold in cities and towns across the United States. It is so readily available that it is being laced into other recreational drugs like

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db491.htm>.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.loc.gov/collections/stars-and-stripes/articles-and-essays/a-world-at-war/american-expeditionary-forces/>.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics>.

cocaine and even marijuana. Americans are addicted to synthetic opioids and are dying from them in the tens of thousands. This is a crisis. Full stop.

How did we get here? The answer, I think, has to do with the “safe use” approach to drugs favored by many in the United States.

What exactly is “safe use?” It is part of the theory of “harm reduction,” which tries to lessen adverse consequences for drug users. The theory holds that they should not be stigmatized and that it is counter-productive to pass and enforce strict drug laws. Notably, proponents have succeeded in opening what they call “safe injection” sites, where drug users can shoot up to their heart’s content while workers stand by to revive them in case they overdose. The truth is there is little safe about them.

I visited one of these supervised injection sites in Manhattan called OnPoint. There I met one man who was hooked on fentanyl. “You go to a spot like this,” he told me. “They give you a shot of fentanyl in the morning. And you come in the night, and they give you a shot of fentanyl at night.” Yet rather than go into OnPoint, he shot up in front of me as we were filming.

Supervised injection sites may keep someone alive for a time. But the sad reality is that eventually, that person will die from these deadly drugs. All the while, “safe use” proponents do not try to help people quit drugs, arguing that they need autonomy over their lives. Addicts go to supervised injection sites to continue using the substances that are killing them. In New York City, people are now asked to carry the opioid reversal drug NARCAN because overdoses are so widespread. This is insanity. Why not make drug users quit rather than enable them in their self-destructive ways?

The scenes in Kensington and elsewhere show that Americans have gotten used to a level of disorder befitting a dystopian hellscape. But they should not accept it because no one should live like this, especially not in the United States. I came to that realization in making my documentary and would like to share three findings from it with the Committee.

First, people must understand that drugs like fentanyl and “tranq” are extremely strong. They are of a different potency than anything the United States has seen before. They are so much stronger and so much more devastating.

Second, they must also understand that people are acquiring these potent drugs with ease. Americans can buy them on the streets, as they have for decades. They are also turning to the internet, particularly the dark web. There a few clicks will get some of the planet’s deadliest substances delivered to your door.

Third, this is not only a working-class problem. The opioid crisis is touching all levels of society. I would refer you to the case of Julia Ghahramani, a 26-year-old Columbia Law School graduate who was fatally poisoned by fentanyl-laced cocaine in 2021. Julia’s story is tragic. She was a driven, accomplished young woman with so much to offer the world. And yet a drug dealer without her knowledge mixed fentanyl into the cocaine she ordered. Julia was one of many Americans whose lives were cut short because of the opioid crisis.

The shibboleths of safe use, harm reduction, and drug decriminalization are not making things better. Unless policymakers reverse course, they are going to get the same deadly results.

They should instead consider a zero-tolerance approach. It includes not only high penalties for the sale and possession of hard drugs like fentanyl but also robust enforcement of the law. The current hands-off policies have failed communities like Kensington, where there is no pressure on addicts to stop using drugs.

This is not fair to law-abiding Americans who bear the secondhand effects of drug use. Nor is it good for addicts who might otherwise get better. If they are ever to recover, they need accountability and personal responsibility. Right now, they are slaves to drugs that are robbing them of the boundless opportunities America has to offer.

Thank you for letting me share my testimony before the Committee.