

Madame. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2430 to extend the DEA's temporary authority to schedule fentanyl-related substances for one year.

Fentanyl is a deadly opioid that kills thousands of Americans annually. When the chemical formula of fentanyl is even slightly modified, creating a fentanyl analogue, these substances can become exponentially more lethal. These analogues have been a driving force behind the opioid epidemic that continues to plague our local communities.

The authority for the DEA to classify these analogues as Schedule 1 substances is critical to law enforcement's ability to keep these drugs off our streets.

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I recently joined my colleagues on a trip to assess the ongoing crisis on our southern border. Fentanyl has continued to move into our country through our ports of entry, mainly through our border with Mexico. On the trip, we spoke with law enforcement officials who detailed the challenges posed by transnational criminal organizations, including drug traffickers, who are attempting to take advantage of the current crisis.

With already limited border security resources being diverted to deal with the humanitarian crisis, drug smugglers are continuing their attempts to push dangerous substances, including fentanyl, into the United States. In the first quarter of 2021, the seizure of fentanyl at our southwestern border by CBP has increased by a staggering 233% from the first quarter of 2020.

At a time when our country is experiencing a border crisis and an opioid crisis, we need to be enacting policies that strengthen law enforcement and enhance public safety, instead of empowering bad actors who are continuing to put our communities at risk.

If we fail to act on this commonsense extension before the existing May 6 deadline, we will be taking away a major tool that law enforcement needs to keep our communities safe. With fentanyl analogues no longer properly scheduled, drug smugglers will remain emboldened to continue and even expand their attempts to move fentanyl into the U.S. This would exacerbate two already unsustainable crises: the ongoing surge at our southern border and the opioid epidemic that has devastated the lives of Americans across the country.

I urge defeat of the Previous Question so we can immediately consider H.R. 2430, and I yield back.