

ATTACHMENT

For Item

#2

Tuesday,
October 19, 2021

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION RECEIVED BY THE
CLERK OF THE BOARD

October 19, 2021

The Honorable Nathan Fletcher
Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
1600 Pacific Highway Room 335
San Diego, CA 92101-2470

Re: "Preventing Fentanyl Overdoses," A Multi-Agency Campaign To Educate Youth

Dear Chairman Fletcher,

I am writing to express my strong support for "Preventing Fentanyl Overdoses," a multi-agency campaign to educate youth. According to the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office, 462 accidental overdoses, including 19 young people under the age of 19, were attributed to fentanyl in 2020, compared to 152 in 2019. Many cases for 2021 are still open and pending confirmation. However, through mid-July, there were already 413 deaths. Compared to the same date range in 2020, there were 177. Of these deaths, approximately 13% are high school- and college-age students. As of September of 2021, overdose deaths are on track to reach well over 700 by the end of this year.

The Medical Examiner's Office commonly attributes the cause of these overdose deaths to counterfeit oxycodone or alprazolam (Xanax) pills that contain fentanyl. At times, these counterfeit pills are combined with non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory medicine, are made to look like legitimate pills and are then sold illegally. Local behavioral health surveillance data indicates an increase in emergency department visits related to substance abuse that correlate with the onset of the pandemic.

Immediate intervention is needed as students return to school campuses. Several California counties have responded to the fentanyl epidemic with a social media campaign directly focused on high school- and college-age students. Fresno and Riverside counties have collaborated with many law enforcement agencies to educate and inform students of these dangers. In other states, where fentanyl overdoses have also sky rocketed, campaigns such as "Laced and Lethal" have been developed to educate this population.

As public safety and law enforcement agencies continue their work to take these deadly drugs off the streets, they cannot do it alone. Partnerships are essential in addressing the misinformation that is perpetuating the damage this deadly drug has brought upon our communities.

The San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) wholeheartedly endorses the multi-agency proposal presented to you this morning. There is no indication that the influx of fentanyl flooding into San Diego will do anything but worsen in the foreseeable future. SDCOE believes it is imperative to take all possible steps to educate the youth of San Diego before they make the fateful decision to interact with these deadly drugs.

Sincerely,



Dr. Paul Gothold
San Diego County Superintendent of Schools