

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
Port Angeles Fentanyl Roundtable

August 17, 2023

Sen. Cantwell Remarks

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Well, I thank you, everyone for convening, this is the [seventh] one of these that we've done around the state.

And we definitely wanted to take the opportunity to be here, because there's so many issues that are unique in the Peninsula.

To try to deal with these issues, sometimes it can feel like you're on your own, or at least far away from other additional resources.

So as we think about federal policy here, we want to hear from you and make sure we understand what's happening that may be unique on the Peninsula or here in Port Angeles.

We know that there have been 26 people who died in overdoses in 2022 in this county. In general we think that the I-5 corridor has put our state in the epicenter of increases in the amount of fentanyl being trafficked. And we want to do everything we can to stop that.

Statewide law enforcement seized over 1.5 million pills laced with fentanyl last year, and this year, we've already acquired 1.6 million fentanyl laced pills. The year's not over yet, so you can just see the volume that's coming in.

So one of the things that we're pushing is called the FEND Off Fentanyl Act, which we just got out of the Senate. And that is to target the cartels and the money laundering, and the assets and resources behind the distribution.

And we also are, in addition to that, looking at more TSA authority at our airports, because we're hearing that there's a large volume that is being trafficked in through just regular handling of luggage and things of that nature, that we may not be actually finding. And so we want to increase the opportunities for us to track that way.

I don't know if there's anything unique, but you could say, there certainly could be on the Peninsula, [some] unique ways in which people might be trafficking that product. So we want to hear about that.

And definitely hear about what you're doing in your response. I'm sure I'm going to hear that we need more beds, that we need more access and resources, because that's what I'm hearing everywhere. But again, you're in a pretty unique situation, because it's not very easy to go somewhere else, is it? And so I think hearing from you about what might help a particular community like Port Angeles deal with the problem. And because we have dealt with behavioral health issues and other things in the past, we know that capacity building is a really great tool. So anyway, I'll just stop with that.

Okay one more issue, affordable housing is usually brought up too, and if there are issues related to that, definitely want to hear about it.