

## NO to HALT

I urge you to vote NO on the Halt All Lethal Trafficking of Fentanyl (HALT) Act (H.R. 467). This bill permanently schedules fentanyl-related substances (FRS) on schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) and imposes harsh mandatory minimums. The vast majority of these substances have never been researched or tested to determine potential harm. In fact, of the few the FDA did test, at least one showed properties similar to the overdose-reversing medication naloxone: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4994371/user-clip-fda>. Others were found to be completely harmless. Scheduling drugs needlessly creates major barriers for health researcher like myself and can prevent treatment breakthroughs or delay them for decades.

This legislation doubles down on the mass incarceration logic and applies some of most severe mandatory minimums at a time when there is broad bipartisan support for treating the opioid crisis as a public health issue.

We have more than three decades of evidence that enforcement first policies fail to reduce drug use and disproportionately harm communities of color. Any policy permanently scheduling these substances will only exacerbate these outcomes as well as over-policing and incarceration of communities of color.

We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past. As Congress looks to undo past harms such as the crack-powder sentencing disparity, we cannot in good conscience vote for doing the same thing again in response to illicit fentanyl-related substances. Just as we saw in reaction to crack cocaine in the 1980s, the emergence of fentanyl analogues has fueled similar waves of alarmist media headlines and law enforcement warnings that are informed by mythology rather than science.

Illicit fentanyl and fentanyl analogues are a major public health issue that requires public health solutions. Rather than extend anti-science policies that will exacerbate mass incarceration and racial disparities in drug policy, Congress and the Biden Administration should prioritize public health legislation that applies evidence-based approaches to fentanyl-related substances.

For more than 50 years, the U.S. has been criminalizing people for using drugs. Yet overdose has not decreased. In fact, it's skyrocketing. Saving lives requires a new approach based in health, science, and evidence – not more punishment. Please vote NO on the HALT Fentanyl Act.