



CITY OF LAGUNA NIGUEL

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July 10, 2023

The Honorable Cottie Petrie-Norris
California State Assembly, AD 74
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0074

Re: AB 1027 (Petrie-Norris) Fentanyl Trafficking: Social Media - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Petrie-Norris:

On behalf of the City of Laguna Niguel, I write in strong support of your AB 1027, which aims to prevent fentanyl poisoning by enacting more stringent data collection and storage requirements for social media companies. This small step will help law enforcement in their fight to stop online fentanyl sales.

The City of Laguna Niguel supports efforts to address the substance use crisis through appropriate prevention and intervention efforts and educational awareness campaigns. Laguna Niguel continues to serve as a leader in Orange County, educating residents on the "One Pill Can Kill" campaign and hosting community forums to discuss this salient issue.

In 2021, 1,348 people in Orange County died of a drug or alcohol-related cause, with opioid-related deaths accounting for 746 (55%) of those deaths. Fentanyl has become the most frequent type of opioid involved in overdose deaths. In 2021, fentanyl was the number one cause of death for people ages 18-45, outpacing suicides and COVID-19.

According to the California Department of Public Health, statewide fentanyl-related deaths increased from 239 in 2016 to 5,722 in 2021 – a nearly 2,300 percent increase over the last five years. In that same period, Orange County fentanyl-related deaths increased by over 1800%, from 37 to 716. The largest age group for overdose deaths in Orange County is 25–44-year olds, followed by 45–64-year olds.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department seized 104.6 pounds of fentanyl and 16,278 pills in 2021. In 2022, 449.9 pounds of fentanyl were seized, along with 405,283 pills. The prevalence of fentanyl across Orange County continues to grow, and we need common sense legislation to help law enforcement tackle this crisis.

Two disturbing trends have dramatically escalated the dangers of fentanyl: the deceptive use of fentanyl in counterfeit pills and the use of social media to traffic illicit substances to young people.

Fentanyl is easy and cheap to manufacture and is often masked and marketed in the form of counterfeit pills. There have been hundreds of reports of people dying of fentanyl overdose after consuming a substance they were misled to believe was something else. In fact, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) recently released a warning on the sharp increase in fake prescription drugs containing fentanyl.

Illegal drug sellers have capitalized on the easy communication and anonymity of social media sites to target pre-teens, teens and unhoused youth. For instance, some social media platforms have chat settings designed to erase chat history after just a few hours. This makes it incredibly difficult for law enforcement to track and prosecute online fentanyl traffickers.

There is a need – and critical opportunity – for social media companies to assume a larger role in combatting the online trafficking of illicit drugs that is occurring on their platforms.

AB 1027 will require social media companies to post in their policy statement and in their biannual report to the Attorney General a general description of their policy regarding accounts that have been actioned for drug-related offenses and how long information related to those accounts is retained. The bill will also require a social media company to retain data on the actioned content for 90 days. Finally, AB 1027 creates a clear and designated point of contact in the Attorney General's office to direct proactive reports from social media companies related specifically to drug activity where an imminent threat to life is identified by the platform.

For these reasons, the City of Laguna Niguel is proud to stand in strong support of AB 1027.

Sincerely,


Kelly Jennings
Mayor