

California State Senate

SENATE MINORITY LEADER BRIAN W. JONES

FORTIETH SENATE DISTRICT

August 31, 2023



Senator Toni Atkins
President pro Tempore
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Madam Pro Tem:

As we all are well aware, fentanyl continues to be a crisis that is killing far too many Californians.

To combat this crisis, members of the California Senate Republican Caucus introduced several pieces of legislation, many of which have stalled in the Senate Public Safety Committee. One bipartisan measure that stalled, Senate Bill 44 by Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh (R-Yucaipa) and Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana), would ensure repeat fentanyl dealers are fully aware of the consequences for selling this lethal drug and help hold them accountable. Specifically, the measure requires courts to inform individuals convicted of fentanyl sales and manufacturing-related offenses that subsequent offenses could result in a charge of voluntary manslaughter or murder.

In early May of this year, when SB 44 stalled in the Senate Public Safety Committee and concerned Californians held a rally outside your district office urging action, you issued a [statement](#) assuring them, "We [the State Senate] also recently created a workgroup of Senators, including Senator Umberg, to work on policy related to this and to helping SB 44 move forward in the legislative process. These bills deserve careful consideration, and continued discussion between members, constituents, and all stakeholders will remain key as we work on this in the months ahead."

As we enter the final weeks of the legislative session, we are running out of time to address this issue and pass SB 44. Our constituents remain rightfully concerned about the dangerous fentanyl crisis and we must do everything we can to stop the needless deaths of Californians. We have reached out for updates about the issue, but have not received any substantive responses, only posturing. With session coming to an end, we cannot allow this stalling to go on any longer. Therefore, we are formally requesting an update on the following questions regarding the working group supposedly created in May 2023:

- Who are the members assigned to the workgroup?
- How many times has this working group met since May 2023, and when did they meet?
- What, if any, progress have they made on adopting any new fentanyl policies, and, specifically, what has the group done to help "SB 44 move forward in the legislative process?"
- What, if any, specific proposals have been discussed or considered in the working group?
- What, if any, stakeholders have been invited and/or attended the workgroup? If any attendees, what dates did they attend and what did they suggest?

The legislature will be considering hundreds of bills during the final weeks of the legislative session. Time is of the essence and there is still an opportunity to pass meaningful legislation that will help combat the fentanyl crisis, including SB 44.

We look forward to working with you, the entire legislature, and the governor to address fentanyl poisoning and moving legislation forward before the 2023 session concludes on Sept. 14.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian W. Jones".

Brian W. Jones
Senate Minority Leader
40th Senate District