

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2227

To require the Comptroller General of the United States to carry out a study on the trafficking into the United States of synthetic drugs, and related illicit finance, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 11, 2023

Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To require the Comptroller General of the United States to carry out a study on the trafficking into the United States of synthetic drugs, and related illicit finance, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Preventing the Financ-
5 ing of Illegal Synthetic Drugs Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) According to the Centers for Disease Con-
2 trol and Prevention, over 107,000 people in the
3 United States died from drug overdoses or drug
4 poisonings in the 12-month period ending January
5 2022, with 67 percent of those deaths involving syn-
6 thetic opioids like fentanyl.

7 (2) According to the United National Office of
8 Drugs and Crime in its “Synthetic Drug Strategy
9 2021-2025”, the number of synthetic drugs, also
10 called new psychoactive substances, has increased
11 631 percent since 2009, with traffickers introducing
12 an average of 80 new substances to the illicit drug
13 market each year from 2009 to 2019.

14 (3) In October 2022, F. Michael McDaniel, di-
15 rector of the Houston High Intensity Drug Traf-
16 ficking Areas program testified in Congress that 1
17 kilogram of fentanyl can produce 1,000,000 counter-
18 feit pills containing 1 milligram of fentanyl, saying,
19 “Currently in Houston, Texas, you can buy a kilo-
20 gram of fentanyl for an average price of \$25,000 to
21 \$30,000. This same kilogram of fentanyl in Culiacán
22 (Mexico) could be purchased at an average price of
23 \$13,500. Currently, the price of a fentanyl pill in
24 Houston ranges from \$6 to \$65. Therefore, an illicit

1 investment of \$30,000 or less could result in a re-
2 turn of \$6 to \$32.5 million.”.

3 (4) According to Celina B. Realuyo, Adjunct
4 Professor, The George Washington University Elliott
5 School of International Affairs, in March 2022 Con-
6 gressional testimony, “Financing is essential to sup-
7 port and sustain the command and control, per-
8 sonnel, arms, communications, logistics and oper-
9 ations of organized crime groups. For this reason,
10 following the money trail and depriving criminals of
11 illicit financial flows can disrupt and disable these
12 networks.”.

13 **SEC. 3. GAO STUDY ON SYNTHETIC DRUGS TRAFFICKING.**

14 (a) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United
15 States shall conduct a study on illicit financing in connec-
16 tion with the trafficking of synthetic drugs, including
17 fentanyl and methamphetamine, fentanyl- and meth-
18 amphetamine-related substances, Captagon, and fentanyl
19 and methamphetamine precursors, that includes—

20 (1) the business of the trafficking of synthetic
21 drugs and related illicit finance, such as the partici-
22 pation of transnational criminal organizations and
23 terror syndicates and their notable trafficking cor-
24 ridors, including source and transit countries;

1 (2) the business models used by transnational
2 criminal organizations, including United States do-
3 mestic and foreign activities for precursor purchase
4 or production, movement along the supply chain,
5 manufacture of the completed product, marketing,
6 distribution, sales, and return of proceeds;

7 (3) the overlap of the business model of human
8 trafficking and the trafficking of synthetic drugs
9 and related illicit finance;

10 (4) the use of online illicit drug markets and
11 the use of social media for the marketing, sale, and
12 payment for synthetic drugs;

13 (5) financial methods used by transnational
14 criminal organizations, including—

15 (A) payment;

16 (B) money laundering; and

17 (C) repatriation of proceeds;

18 (6) the use of social media applications like
19 Snapchat, Discord, and Facebook and payment ap-
20 plications like Cash App to facilitate financial trans-
21 actions for synthetic drug trafficking, especially
22 among young people; and

23 (7) United States Government activities to com-
24 bat illicit finance related to the trafficking of syn-
25 thetic drugs, including—

1 (A) interagency collaboration, such as per-
2 sonnel detailed to other agencies to support the
3 effort to combat synthetic drugs trafficking and
4 related illicit finance;

5 (B) intergovernmental collaboration;

6 (C) intersectoral collaboration with the pri-
7 vate sector, including the business and non-
8 governmental communities; and

9 (D) identified gaps or resource deficiencies
10 in combating the trafficking of synthetic drugs
11 and related illicit finance in the coordination
12 and collaboration activities described in sub-
13 paragraphs (A) through (C).

14 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
15 of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall
16 submit to Congress a report that contains all findings and
17 determinations made in conducting the study required
18 under subsection (a).

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