

I think it is important to remind people who are asking themselves “Why should we care about Puerto Rico?”—I will remind them that 4 million U.S. citizens live there, that the first American to lose their life to Zika lived in Puerto Rico, and that Puerto Ricans routinely travel to the continental United States—to Florida and New York especially. These 4 million Puerto Rican citizens have no voice here in the Senate, so I will make sure they are not forgotten as we work on solutions to this virus that has disproportionately impacted these Americans.

When we return next week to continue debating appropriations bills, I hope we can come together on this issue. I hope we can find a way forward that deals with these issues fully and that helps to stop this disease in its tracks and that saves lives.

I urge my colleagues here in the Senate, and the House as well, to look at the proposal Senator NELSON and I will introduce and offer their input and ultimately sign on and get this passed. As we know, it is not going to be enough to see progress here in the Senate; we need the House to act as well, and I hope we can start doing that next week. We need to act. Zika is taking lives, it is hurting unborn children, and this problem is only going to get worse as we move forward.

EUREKA GARDENS

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, tomorrow I will be visiting the Eureka Garden Apartments in Jacksonville, FL, which is a Section 8 apartment complex that is supposed to provide affordable and safe living conditions for low-income members of the Jacksonville community, but it doesn't. Instead, its tenants have been subjected to dangerous, often downright disgusting living conditions for years. They raised their concerns repeatedly with the managers of the facility and local officials, only to be met for the most part with bureaucratic indifference.

My staff and I have been working on this since it first came to light last fall, but there has been a frustrating, disturbing lack of progress from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and, more importantly, from the owner of the complex.

Frankly, I have had enough. I am heading down there tomorrow to see what we have to do and whom we need to put pressure on to get things moving. I will be touring the facility and meeting with Tracy Grant, who is the president of the tenants association. I will be joined by Councilman Garrett Dennis, Jacksonville Mayor Len Curry, and Pastor Mark Griffin of Wayman Ministries, who will be meeting with residents. I intend to commend the residents tomorrow for how united and resilient they have been throughout this ordeal, even while the Federal Government failed them.

For years the Department of Housing and Urban Development has certified

this facility and as a result has put hundreds of families at risk. When HUD inspected the property last summer, they passed the complex with a score of 85 out of 100. Less than a month later, residents were complaining about how bad their living conditions were.

When my staff visited the complex, it was nearly unlivable. They saw crumbling stairs, black mold, and exposed electrical wiring that had been covered up by a trash bag. They smelled the natural gas that would soon hospitalize residents days later. This was and is unacceptable.

For months, my office, along with Mayor Curry, the city council, and the tenants association, pushed to have improvements and repairs done to this complex. In February, HUD finally had a date by which all repairs must be completed. When the time came to reinspect Eureka Gardens, it passed inspection, and they eventually renewed their contract with the property's owner, but the residents continued to say what they had said all along: HUD's inspections aren't working.

Just recently, HUD revealed that Eureka Gardens passed with a score of 62. The passing score is a 60. However, a senior HUD official admitted that HUD officials do not believe the property would currently pass another inspection. HUD essentially admitted that it had certified a failing facility. Something is clearly wrong with the inspection process, and Floridians are being hurt because of it.

I will be down there tomorrow to find out how we can put an end to this problem once and for all. The residents of Eureka Gardens cannot be forced to suffer under mismanagement and apathy any longer. Children cannot continue to be put at risk due to gas leaks and other hazardous conditions. HUD cannot be allowed to continue to rubberstamp approval of failing housing complexes, only to further slumlike conditions for the most vulnerable tenants.

I will continue to look for solutions to help make sure the conditions in Eureka Gardens are fixed and aren't repeated anywhere else. If we determine that congressional action is necessary, then I am prepared to take it. The residents of Eureka Gardens deserve safe living conditions, and we will make sure that is exactly what they get.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

OPIOID CRISIS

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I wish to open my remarks with a congratula-

tions to the Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative based in Gloucester, MA.

Since it began less than 11 months ago, this program is now partnering with more than 100 police departments in 24 States around the country to help people with opioid addiction to get the treatment they need. The program's approach is simple, but it is also revolutionary: having law enforcement work with those suffering from the disease of addiction by removing the stigma surrounding it and placing them into treatment instead of behind bars.

I thank the founders of this program—Gloucester police chief Leonard Campanello and John Rosenthal—for their leadership and compassion, and I urge everyone to learn more about this national model for combating the opioid crisis.

It is that crisis that I am here to talk about this afternoon. Today, I wish to call attention to a serious issue facing Massachusetts and soon to face every single community in the United States of America. Illicit fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin. Let me say that again. Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine. It is responsible for the largest increase in drug overdose deaths in recent years.

More than 700 deaths in the United States were attributable to fentanyl and its components between 2013 and 2014. In Massachusetts alone, 336 people died from fentanyl-related overdoses between 2014 and 2015. More recently, among the 1,319 opioid-related deaths in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2015 for which a blood test was available, more than half—754—tested positive for fentanyl. That is an astounding number for one State. That is an astounding increase in the impact that fentanyl is having in deaths in the State of Massachusetts.

But it is not just isolated to Massachusetts, because fentanyl is the Godzilla of opioids, and it will overrun communities and lay them to waste unless we take action now to stop it.

For those who may not know about this new scourge, Mexico and China are the primary foreign sources for illicit fentanyl, for the chemicals and building blocks from which it is made, and for other illicit substances very similar to fentanyl—called fentanyl analogs—and which are trafficked into the United States from outside of our borders. Fentanyl powder is often mixed with other illicit drugs like heroin or is disguised in pill form to resemble an opioid painkiller like OxyContin.

Many drug users overdose on fentanyl because they have no idea that it is mixed into whatever substance they are injecting or whatever pills they are swallowing, and they do not realize just how deadly it is until it is too late.

But capturing a total and accurate number of drug overdoses caused by fentanyl has been very challenging.

Coroners and medical examiners do not usually test for the drug unless they are asked to, and they are often unaware that an overdose has a fentanyl link when an individual tests positive for a different substance such as heroin.

Even more troubling, the men and the women who first respond to the scene of an overdose may not know how to identify fentanyl or how to handle the drug. This makes local and State first responders very vulnerable to the drug's harmful effects, because if the fentanyl powder is absorbed into the skin or accidentally inhaled, it can be deadly. In fact, a dose of just three salt-sized grains of fentanyl can be lethal.

So think about that. You are a first responder. You are going into a home or a business thinking that you are responding to an opioid overdose situation when, in fact, you might be exposing yourself to the fentanyl in the air or to something which gets on your skin. That is how deadly this new substance is that is creating this epidemic across our country.

Recently, DEA agents in Seattle raided a suspected fentanyl lab wearing HAZMAT suits and protective gear to make sure they did not inadvertently breathe in or touch the fentanyl. The DEA has told me that they sometimes cannot use dogs to sniff packages coming in from overseas suspected of containing fentanyl because these drug-detection dogs may die if they even inhale it.

The Drug Enforcement Administration is so concerned about this synthetic opioid that in March of 2015 it issued a nationwide alert highlighting fentanyl as a threat to health and public safety.

Fentanyl is a very real problem in my home State of Massachusetts. Lawrence, MA, which is about half an hour north of Boston, is a hotspot for fentanyl trafficking. From Lawrence, the drug ends up being processed and sold all over New England.

There are efforts already in place to address the spread of fentanyl. Mexico and China are its primary foreign sources and have been the focus of diplomatic efforts to curb fentanyl trafficking. We need to make sure that those countries are living up to their promises to combat the flow of this deadly drug and other synthetic opioids into the United States.

We know naloxone, sometimes called Narcan, is an effective antidote against an opioid overdose. But a single dose of naloxone is typically not enough to combat an overdose that includes fentanyl.

That is why earlier today I called on the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of State to outline our domestic and international strategy against the trafficking of illicit fentanyl into America. As we await their responses, I know there are several critical steps that we must take in order to save lives.

We must educate the public about the existence of illicit fentanyl and the harm it can do.

We must educate first responders—our firefighters, our EMTs, our sheriffs, our health care workers—so that they can protect against injury to themselves as they are trying to identify a fentanyl overdose and so that they can protect themselves from the harmful effects of that drug.

Identifying a fentanyl overdose could mean the difference between administering multiple lifesaving doses of naloxone or death.

We should invest in programs that ensure that naloxone—Narcan—is readily available and accessible to those most likely to witness an overdose. We need to make sure that there are no shortages or unnecessary price increases for this lifesaving treatment.

We should issue guidance to States regarding the protocol for fentanyl testing in order to obtain a more accurate picture of fentanyl's deadly impact.

Illicit fentanyl is different from other opioids. It is difficult to detect and has deadly consequences for those who unknowingly come within its path. We cannot let another day pass without taking the necessary steps to educate our communities about fentanyl, to develop a national strategy, and to collaborate with our international partners—the Mexicans and the Chinese, especially—so that we can keep this illicit drug out of the cities and towns all over our country.

American lives depend on a solution to the latest opioid crisis. It is going to be something that people look back at and say: How can something have been worse than the heroin epidemic? How can something have caused more deaths than the heroin epidemic? That is where fentanyl is already in the State of Massachusetts. It is something that is going to come to each and every State in our country.

We have to take action now. We have to ensure that we protect our borders from it entering, but then we have to make sure that we give the proper training and protections and put them in place for every State and every city and town to be able to protect against this infecting our communities.

So I thank the Chair for giving me the opportunity to address the Chamber today.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN VIOLENCE AND NATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the epidemic of gun vio-

lence that continues to plague our Nation.

Every year, around 32,000 Americans are killed by guns. According to recent Centers for Disease Control statistics, every day, on average, 297 Americans are shot, and 91 of those shootings are fatal. Communities across the Nation are affected by this violence, and no community has suffered more than the city of Chicago in my home State of Illinois.

From the start of the year through May 10, at least 1,242 people were shot in Chicago. During the same period, there were at least 215 murders in Chicago, the vast majority committed with guns. The level of violence in Chicago is significantly higher than in recent years. And more people have been shot in Chicago this year than in New York City and Los Angeles combined. It is devastating.

I met 2 weeks ago with the top Federal law enforcement officials in Chicago: U.S. Attorney Zach Fardon, U.S. Marshal Ed Gilmore, and leaders from the FBI, ATF, and DEA. They reaffirmed their commitment to do all they can at the Federal level to bring down this high level of gun violence in the city. They are committed to working with the Chicago Police Department and its new superintendent, Eddie Johnson, to ensure that Chicago's residents are both protected and respected by law enforcement.

There is much work that needs to be done to improve community policing in Chicago to better safeguard the public's safety. I am confident that the Justice Department's ongoing review of the CPD will lead to important reforms that will build trust between officers and the communities they serve. We have seen Justice Department reviews in other cities produce dramatic improvements. When communities and cops are working together with a relationship of trust and respect, it makes it harder for criminals to operate.

I also want to commend the many community leaders, faith leaders, teachers, volunteers, and family members who are working to provide Chicago's children with a better path, away from the violence. I met recently with students at John Hope College Prep in Englewood on the South Side of Chicago, along with City Year volunteers who worked with them. It was inspiring to hear how these high school freshmen and sophomores talked about their work with their City Year mentors. One student told me "the thing I love most about City Year is that they never let you give up." With the help of their mentors, these students are doing well in school, steering clear of the gangs, and planning for a bright future.

It is so important that we nurture these kinds of efforts throughout Chicago. We have to give the younger generation the opportunities and hope that will lead them away from the path of gangs and violence.

We also have a responsibility to help these efforts by stemming the flood of