



**THE CHALLENGE:** Despite past efforts, more Americans died by fentanyl poisoning in 2020 than ever before and each day hundreds more die. Increasingly, what was once seen as a crisis that predominantly affected white and rural Americans has emerged as a disproportionate killer of Black Americans in metropolitan regions.

**THE SOLUTION:** Designating fentanyl as a Weapon of Mass Destruction will ***empower the U.S. to shift from a policy of mass incarceration of Americans with substance use disorder and low-level drug dealers*** to an all-of-government approach that places the focus on the foreign cartels smuggling this poison into the United States. With this bold strategy focused on the manufacturers and traffickers of illicit fentanyl abroad, we can save lives domestically, stop the poisonings, and move those suffering from substance use disorder to recovery programs rather than jails.

#### **QUICK FACTS:**

- In 2020, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) projects more than [93,000](#) Americans died of a drug overdose — a drastic increase from the 70,630 individuals who died of overdose in 2019. This marks the highest annual number on record and the largest single-year percentage increase in the past 20 years. CDC data indicates the cause of this surge in deaths is fentanyl poisoning.
- A September 2021 study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health [found](#) the rate of opioid deaths among Blacks increased by 38% from 2018 to 2019, while rates for other racial and ethnic groups did not rise.

#### **GOVERNMENT PAPERS:**

**HHS Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality:** [“Blacks Experiencing Fast-Rising Rates of Overdose Deaths Involving Synthetic Opioids Other than Methadone”](#) (February 2020)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):** [“The Opioid Crisis and the Black/African American Population: An Urgent Issue”](#) (May, 2020)

#### **ARTICLES OF NOTE:**

**AP:** [“In pandemic, drug overdose deaths soar among Black Americans”](#) (June 24, 2021)

**NPR:** [“Black Opioid Deaths Increase Faster Than Whites, Spurring Calls For Treatment Equity”](#) (September 10, 2021)

**San Francisco Chronicle:** [“Overdose epidemic disproportionately affects Black people, data shows”](#) (September 4, 2021)

**Philadelphia Inquirer:** [“Philadelphia drug deaths soared again in 2020, hitting Black residents hardest: ‘It’s a racial justice issue’”](#) (June 3, 2021)