



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 22-1159, **Version:** 1

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Recommendation to request City Attorney to draft a resolution declaring fentanyl and opioid overdose a Public Health Crisis; and

Request City Manager to work with Health and Human Services Department, in collaboration with Long Beach Unified School District, to develop an informational outreach campaign to educate high school students and parents about the dangers of fentanyl and opioid use.

Since 1999, the United States has experienced an opioid overdose epidemic. Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), opioid overdose deaths quadrupled between 1999 and 2019. This issue has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as the 12-month period ending in May 2020 saw the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a year by the CDC, who suggest the pandemic accelerated rates beyond expectation. This is particularly concerning when considering the impact it has had on younger, more vulnerable populations. In Los Angeles County, the crude rate of opioid-related death among people aged 15-19 increased by 248.8% from Q2 of 2019 to Q2 of 2020. A major driver increasing overdose deaths has been the surge of fentanyl being consumed. Fentanyl is a synthetic drug similar to morphine that is 50 to 100 times more potent. Although it can be prescribed, the drug is also made and used illegally; fentanyl is often combined with other drugs and pressed into pills that resemble prescription opioids, contributing to its reputation as a "street drug" and increasing risk for consumers. According to the CDC, synthetic opioids contributed to over 82% of all opioid-related deaths in 2020. Fentanyl was also responsible for the seven overdoses and one death among Los Angeles Unified School District students in September of 2022.

The Long Beach Health and Human Services Department's (Health Department) website currently has a page dedicated to information on preventing opioid abuse and overdose. The site contains a media campaign developed by the Los Angeles (LA) County Public Health Department, information from the CDC, opioid-related death rates for Long Beach, the phone number to the LA County Substance Abuse Service Helpline and more. In June of 2022, Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) issued a community warning from the LA County Public Health Department about a large amount of contaminated Ecstasy pills that entered the Los Angeles illicit drug market, urging parents to discuss the significant dangers of ingesting illicit pills. This is the only mention of fentanyl or opioid overdose throughout the entire site. Meanwhile, searching "opioid" on the Los Angeles Unified School District website yields six pages of relevant results with useful information. The disparity between the Health Department's website and LBUSD's lack of information highlights a potential information gap between the City and its students. While the Health Department has done its part to provide adequate resources on their website, coordinated outreach is needed to provide Long Beach

high schoolers with more information on the dangers of fentanyl.

A similar outreach campaign was requested in January of 2017 following the legalization of adult-use marijuana in Long Beach. The item called for the Health Department to work with various stakeholders like LBUSD, Long Beach City College, the Office of Traffic Safety, and marijuana business owners to develop an outreach and education campaign teaching local children about the consequences of youth marijuana use, educating drivers on the dangers of marijuana-impaired driving, and instructing parents on the significant role they play in effectively teaching their kids about marijuana safety. On February 2, 2018, the Health Department released a memo outlining their progress on this initiative. Successes referenced include hiring a Marijuana Education Program Coordinator, conducting a community assessment survey in partnership with Los Angeles County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, developing and distributing educational flyers and brochures, establishing a dedicated web page for the marijuana education program, and pursuing funding opportunities to support the campaign.

An initiative geared toward educating students and their parents on the dangers of fentanyl and opioid use could help prevent future overdoses, creating safer environments for Long Beach youth. For that reason, I am requesting the City Manager to work with the Health Department to develop an informational outreach campaign aimed at educating Long Beach high school students and parents on the dangers of fentanyl and opioid use once adequate funds and staffing are available.

This item has been reviewed by Recovery Budget Officer Dee Okam on September 25, 2022.

This recommendation requests the City Manager to work with the Health and Human Services Department, in collaboration with Long Beach Unified School District, to develop an informational outreach campaign to educate students and parents about the dangers of fentanyl and opioid use. The requested action is anticipated to have a significant impact on staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and a significant impact on existing City Council priorities. There is no local job impact associated with the recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

AL AUSTIN COUNCILMAN,  
EIGHTH DISTRICT