



# AUGUST PFLUGER

Representing the 11th District of Texas

## **Drug-Free Social Media and Digital Communities Act**

### *The Urgency of Addressing the Social Media-Driven Drug Overdose Epidemic*

#### **Background:**

The drug overdose epidemic in the United States has reached alarming proportions, with synthetic opioids, particularly illicit fentanyl, driving a surge in overdose deaths. Law enforcement is increasingly concerned about the role of social media platforms, which Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Administrator Anne Milgram referred to as the "superhighway of drugs." The ease with which individuals, especially teenagers, can unlawfully acquire illicit substances through social media poses a significant challenge.

#### **Dangers of Social Media-Facilitated Drug Trade:**

Social media platforms, including Snapchat and others, have become hotspots for the illicit drug trade. Individuals connect with drug dealers through these platforms, resulting in rapid and discreet transactions with minimal evidence. Notably, the distribution and acquisition of illicit drugs encompass a range of online marketplaces on both the surface web and the dark web, with various social media platforms being key players. Counterfeit fentanyl and methamphetamine pills, falsely marketed as prescription drugs, pose severe health risks, with 60% of fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills containing a potentially lethal dose.

#### **What the bill does:**

The proposed bill mirrors the successful policies of 21 U.S. Code § 860, the Drug-Free Schools and Communities, and increases penalties for distributing or selling drugs through interactive computer services, e.i. social media platforms.

#### **Why Support this Legislation?**

1. **Protecting Vulnerable Populations:** Social media platforms have made illegal drugs more accessible to children than ever before, with constant exposure contributing to the normalization of drug use.
2. **Consistency in Legal Approach:** Aligning with existing laws focused on traditional drug distribution, this legislation ensures a coherent legal framework in the face of evolving challenges.
3. **Enhanced Deterrence:** Clear legal consequences for selling drugs on social media platforms will serve as a powerful deterrent to illicit activities.
4. **Empowering Law Enforcement:** The legislation provides law enforcement agencies with the tools needed to investigate and prosecute those involved in online drug sales.

By enhancing penalties for distributing drugs on social media, the legislation aims to deter criminal drug networks, safeguard vulnerable populations, and protect the health and safety of communities.

To cosponsor this bill, please contact [Alexandra.davis@mail.house.gov](mailto:Alexandra.davis@mail.house.gov)