

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor R. Romero, City Manager T. Thomure, Council Member L. Santa Cruz, Council Member P. Cunningham, Council Member K. Dahl, Council Member N. Lee, Council Member R. Fimbres, Council Member K. Uhlich, Chief of Police C. Kasmar #37363, Deputy Chief M. Prieto #41546, Assistant Chief D. Duffy #42223, Captain B. Morales #50479, Lieutenant J. Bredehoft #46581, Sergeant B. Pelton #39293

From: Officer J Voss #43601

Date: January 23, 2025

Subject: Tucson's Fentanyl Crisis

I write to you to voice my concerns that directly affects the safety of so many Tucsonans that I swore an oath to protect.

I am a police officer with the City of Tucson and I have been employed with the department for over 24 years. During my time at this department, I have spent the overwhelming majority in a patrol capacity. I care about my community and I believe that we are falling short of our goal to protect our community members. Before I begin, I would like to stress the fact that this is not a political argument. I will be citing facts and only facts.

Like most of America, our community, our businesses, and our residents, have been heavily victimized by the drug addicted homeless community and the crimes associated to the drug addicted homeless community to include, but not limited to, criminal damage, criminal trespassing, open air drug use & drug sales, reckless burning, urinating & defecating in public, and general theft (this includes shoplifting and burglary). The wide-spread addiction to fentanyl (and in most cases these addicts are using fentanyl AND methamphetamine) has a grip on Tucson.

As bad as things are right now, I believe they are about to get much worse. I remember fentanyl or the "blues" showing up on our streets in or around 2019. Although the fentanyl pills were not cheap, usually around \$7-11 each, they quickly became the go-to drug in Tucson. In 2021, due a policy change with the new presidential administration regarding the southern border, the supply of fentanyl exploded and the fentanyl users in Tucson could expect to pay \$2-3 per pill. Also, according to the addicts I have spoken to, the fentanyl pills are smoked so the addict can avoid getting sick. If they are looking to get high, most are using fentanyl powder. The fentanyl used on the east side of Tucson is predominantly powder. It is widely known that the raw materials used for fentanyl production originates in China and is sold to the drug cartels in Mexico. There they are pressed into counterfeit pills and then shipped to the US through our southern border with Mexico.

Again, this is not a political argument. Rather, it is the ability to identify patterns and apply our knowledge of recent history to those patterns and predict a likely outcome. Whether you find yourself on the left or the right of the political spectrum, you would have to acknowledge that President Donald Trump has run a campaign largely on securing the southern border and stopping the flow of fentanyl into this country. As we are all responsible for the safety of our community, we must look at the fentanyl crisis through an economic lens, specifically, supply & demand. Remember, in 2019, fentanyl pills were roughly \$7-11 each. After the border policies opened the southern border in 2021, the price dropped to \$2-3 per pill. If we take President Trump at his word, the border will be secured or more secured shortly after he is inaugurated. What that means for us is there is about to be a drastic price change for street drugs that come into our community through the southern border. I believe we can expect the price of fentanyl pills to jump to \$15-25 per pill. I believe it is unrealistic at best to think Tucson's drug addicted homeless community will see the writing on the wall and start looking to get clean and get a job. I think it is more likely that the drug addicted homeless community will increase their criminal activity which I believe will also lead to an increase in violent crime.

What can we do about it? In the last 2-4 years, I have noticed that the tools your street cops have been using for decades to control the drug addicted homeless community, have been taken away from our tool boxes, one by one. Here are a few examples.

PANHANDLING FROM THE MEDIAN- This law, Tucson City Code 20-501, is still active in the Tucson City Code. Tucson Police Officers are just not allowed to enforce it. This is frustrating for several different reasons. The fentanyl addicts use panhandling from the medians as one of the main sources of funding for their drug addictions. We have also learned that some of the fentanyl dealers are hiding in plain sight "flying a sign" on the medians while at the same time selling their poison. We should also consider the safety aspect of this subject. On the east side alone, two panhandlers were struck by cars in the medians in the last month. I believe it is only a matter of time before one of these people are killed while on the medians. I believe the city will be in legal jeopardy when it is discovered that an active law is on the books that would prevent panhandling from the median but patrol officers were powerless to enforce it. Your street cops are in constant contact with business owners, managers, and employees. We are constantly told that when we used to enforce the pan handling law, the overall lawlessness in their businesses would go down. They would see an obvious decrease in criminal trespassing and aggressive panhandling in the parking lots. Shoplifting incidents and assaults would also decrease.

AREA/ ZONE RESTRICTIONS- Your street cops have also been using this tool for decades. After an offender is arrested multiple times in the same area, an area restriction can be requested through the courts. This is a punishment enhancement where the court orders an offender to stay out of a designated area. If the area restriction is violated, the charge can be the original charge of criminal trespassing but the charge of contempt of court could also be added. Three questions are asked of the offender: Do you work at all? Do you legally live or camp in the area? Do you receive social services in the area? If the answer to those questions is no, it is clear the offender has no legal reason to be in the area and area restrictions can be helpful in curbing bad behavior.

SUPPORT FROM THE COUNTY ATTORNEY/ CITY PROSECUTOR- For the last few years, I have seen our offenders booked into the jail with several warrants (up to 21 in my personal experience) in addition to new charges and only stay in jail for 10-14 days. I speak to a lot of addicts. The one thing that I have heard from the ones, who actually got clean, is that they got clean at the Pima County Jail. I attended Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). In this training, several former addicts were brought in to

talk to the class. Every one, without exception, told the class they were never going to get clean until they hit “rock bottom” and they hit rock bottom at the Pima County Jail. In the past, if an offender was arrested with 3 charges of contempt of court (13-2810A1), that offender would be held in jail for 30 days. At the end of 30 days, that addict would at least have the beginning of sobriety and we hope they could build upon that foundation. These members of the drug addicted homeless community no longer get substantial time for their misdemeanor crimes.

LONGER SENTENCES AT THE JAIL- If given a long enough timeline, the Pima County Jail is undefeated as a rehab facility. I base that on a recovering addict I recently spoke to...

When an addict is jailed for 10-14 days, it is not sufficient time to purge the dope from their system. 30-45 days, according to the addicts, offers the addict/ offenders a much higher chance of success. When an addict is released after a couple of days, the jail is effectively releasing a fiend upon the city at the height of their body’s need to fix. These addicts need only to jump on a free bus and they are back to the spot where they were arrested. I have included two examples below.

██████████ was arrested on December 19, 2024 and booked into the Pima County Jail (reference Tucson PD case number P2412190033). Her charges included possession of a dangerous drug (methamphetamine, a class 4 felony), unlawful possession of narcotic paraphernalia (a class 6 felony), and 10 outstanding warrants issued by Tucson City Court. She was arrested again on December 21, 2024 in the same area (reference Tucson PD case number P2412210052) for criminal trespassing. When I contacted her the second time, I asked her why she wasn’t in jail and she told me she couldn’t believe they let her out. She told me she was released at a “SMRT Hearing” and released the “that night.”

██████████ was arrested on December 25, 2024 and booked into jail. His charges included 14 warrants issued by the Tucson City Court and two additional “stop and arrests.” On January 4, 2025, he was arrested again on the property where he had been previously trespassed and where I have arrested him many times. I attempted to arrest him for criminal trespassing and he resisted. I used appropriate force and I was able to detain him in handcuffs. He was found to be in possession of a single fentanyl pill as well as suspected fentanyl powder. I spoke to pretrial services at the Pima County Jail and learned that in regards to the December 25, 2024 arrest, the 14 warrants for Mr. Tariku were “quashed” and the two new charges were dismissed. He was released on January 3, 2025, just 10 days after he was arrested and had no conditions of release that barred him from returning to this location.

The police officers I work with are highly skilled and highly motivated to fix the problems that are facing our community. We can fix this; we just need help.

I thank you for your time.