

Hays CISD Superintendent Dr. Eric Wright opening remarks at a fentanyl roundtable discussion with United States Senator John Cornyn hosted by Hays CISD at Johnson High School Thursday, February 23, 2023.

[DR WRIGHT – Opening Remarks]

Let me begin by thanking our distinguished panel for joining us today for this critical discussion.

The fentanyl crisis is by no means unique to Hays CISD, nor is it necessarily more or less dangerous for our students than it is anywhere else in the state or the country.

We have, however, as a school district community, had to bear the burden of this crisis in a very real and devastating way. No one can know that pain more than the parents of the five students we've lost this year to fentanyl poisoning. Some of them are on our panel today and I cannot thank them enough for their strength and courage in advocating for solutions.

I also thank our law enforcement community, our student health services, and two of our students for participating on the panel.

When we first learned that fentanyl had taken the life of one of our students – it was a tragedy. A week later last summer, when a second student died – it was an unnerving pattern. When we lost our third student just as

the school year began – we knew we had a full crisis on our hands. We made the conscious decision to fight fentanyl head-on.

It has always been our practice in Hays CISD to be straight-forward with our parents, students, and staff. After all, this school district belongs to them.

When confronted with the fentanyl crisis – our response was a given. We chose to talk about this horrible problem, to do everything in our power to address it, and to educate the community about the dangers that have hit home.

During the past 15 to 20 years, school districts have expended great effort to harden themselves against intruder and active shooter threats. More recently, we have responded to a global pandemic with urgency. These are all important threats against which we must be prepared.

As fentanyl took the lives of our students – so rapidly and without warning – we knew that this threat was very real too. It needed our attention, resources, and vigilance.

On our website, you'll see our Fighting Fentanyl campaign. It is a campaign that grows weekly and a conversation that we will continue to have – as long as it takes to curb the threat.

[DR WRIGHT – introduction Senator Cornyn]

I am especially humbled and pleased that we have a very prominent ally to help us fight fentanyl. That is United States Senator John Cornyn.

When our story first began making news, Senator Cornyn reached out to us right away to offer his help. He has been on the forefront in researching this crisis and developing policy that has the potential to make a real difference.

Senator Cornyn did not hesitate to join with us in our fight against this horrible drug. I say our fight because it is so personal to us. But, it is indeed a fight we must all undertake. Fentanyl has destroyed far too many lives and we need to stop it.

It is my distinct privilege to welcome Senator Cornyn to Hays CISD. Senator we appreciate you being here this morning.

[Senator Cornyn Speaks – then returns conversation to Dr. Wright]

[DR WRIGHT – Introduction Jeri Skrocki]

Hays CISD is lucky to have on its team a remarkable Chief Safety and Security Officer – Jeri Skrocki.

She is a leader in school safety in Texas and has been spearheading our efforts, as a district, to fight fentanyl.

Today – she is the moderator of our panel.

[Jeri speaks]