Dean Francis, Founder of End Kratom Addiction

My name is Dean Francis. I'm the founder and president of End Kratom Addiction. I'm also a dad to an awesome son named Cameron, who lost his twenties and almost died twice due to an addiction to kratom.

It's hard to put a moment like this into words. These three moms shouldn't have to be here. They live with a pain that very few people will ever understand. But they're here to do everything they can to prevent other families across this nation from the hell and the torment that they endure on a daily basis.

All of this is due to the greed of a nefarious industry that exploits loopholes in our dietary supplement laws to masquerade a highly addictive and deadly drug is a plant-based herbal supplement.

They ruin vulnerable population groups like young people and veterans with promises of energy boost or relief from anxiety or pain, only to addict them for profit. Make no mistake: the people behind this industry formerly served time in federal prison.

They are former distributors of products called “spice” and “K2” that addicted many and killed many before the DEA stopped it, and so-called experts who were formerly paid by Purdue Pharma to promote OxyContin.

This has gone on since 2016 and 2018, when two separate DEA commissioners, under two separate presidents, recommended kratom and all of its derivatives be classified as a Schedule I drug, only to be stopped by highly aggressive and devious lobbying efforts from this industry.

We shouldn't have to be here.

I want to thank Senator Grassley today for being the fighter that he is to help stop this national nightmare. I also want to thank the other seven senators who signed on to his recent letter to inquire as to why our federal agencies recently agreed to increase threshold limits that seemingly accommodate the two largest craven brands in the nation.

I also want to thank the 11 senators who, earlier this year, in a bipartisan letter, called on the FDA to schedule all kratom products as was originally intended years ago. And I also want to thank Dr. Kevin Sabat and the Foundation for Drug Policy Solutions for helping make today possible and fearlessly and relentlessly championing this cause.

But no one deserves more credit for today than these three moms who travel here and openly are sharing their stories in order to protect mothers.

This is Rebecca Strang from Atlanta, Georgia, mother to a son named Robert. Tia Rustici is from Boise, Idaho, mom to a daughter named Kielee. And Susan Eppert is from Michigan, mom to a son named Matthew.

On behalf of millions of parents around the nation, I thank you all for your courage and being here today.