Rebecca Strang (Atlanta, Georgia)

Good afternoon. My name is Rebecca Strang. My son is Robert Strang, whose beautiful face some of you may already recognize.

This is Robert. This is from his memorial service one month ago in Atlanta, where over 1,400 people showed up to celebrate the loss of his tragic life.

Robert was a junior at Ole Miss. He was full of life. He was kind, joyful, loving and brought so much happiness to the people around him. He was a son, a brother, a grandson and a devoted friend. He was deeply loved and had his entire life ahead of him.

I'm here today as a mother who lost Robert to kratom 58 days ago.

I never imagined I would find myself standing in Washington, meeting with senators and fighting for sweeping changes in drug policy.

This is not the life I envisioned. It's definitely not the life I wanted. But I'm here today for Robert, because I am determined to find a purpose for my pain, and for Robert's life and his legacy to be much larger than his death.

The worst day of my life has suddenly become my life's work.

I want to thank End Kratom Addiction and the Foundation for Drug Policy Solutions for their dedication and support on our behalf. I'm immensely grateful to Senator Grassley for taking the time to meet with us and hear our stories.

I want lawmakers to understand the human cost behind every discussion, every debate and every vote involving kratom, synthetic compounds and threshold limits. These are not just simply policy discussions; they represent real people, real families and real lives, like Robert, that are being tragically lost.

We need to be honest about the dangers of these products. We desperately need transparency, accountability and meaningful action.

This shouldn't be a political issue. It's a matter of common sense and protecting lives.

Families and lawmakers should not have to become experts in drug chemistry, or rely on impossible product regulation, or fight their way through Washington to protect their children from the dangerous, readily available product known as kratom.

My position is very clear: all kratom products should be banned. We have to stop putting profit and industry interests ahead of people's lives. It's time to look beyond who stands to profit and focus on who stands to suffer.

Robert's life mattered, and his death matters.

There's a level of exhaustion that comes with losing a child. I'm talking about waking up every morning to a new reality that I never wanted, and that never should have happened. Every day I have to face a world that is still spinning, while my whole world has stopped.

There is nothing I wouldn't give to have Robert back. To hear his voice, see his smile, hug him one more time. I would trade every meeting and every moment here in Washington for just one more day with my son.

I don't have that choice, but I can choose to spend the rest of my life fighting to make sure that no other mother has to sit where I am sitting today.