

Chinese fentanyl cartel ordered to pay Akron family \$18M by judge

Ruling is first-of-its kind to go after overseas fentanyl producers

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CLEVELAND, Ohio (WOIO) -On Wednesday, it was announced a [Summit County judge](#) ruled in favor of the Rauh family, who lost a son to a fentanyl overdose in 2015, and ordered a Chinese cartel to pay \$18 million.

Thomas "Tommy" Rauh became addicted to prescription opioids after a rollerblading accident, which then led to his death.

According to his father James Rauh, Tommy tried to overcome the addiction but took a fatal dose in 2015, laced with fentanyl.

The fentanyl that killed Tommy was traced to, and produced by, the Zheng drug trafficking cartel in China.

"Our son Tommy was stolen from us," Rauh said. "He never stood a chance against the incredibly potent poison produced by the reckless and malicious greed of the Zheng cartel. To save American lives, we must stop the foreign manufacture of fentanyl and hold them accountable."

The judgement awarded the family \$15 million for the wrongful death claim, \$1 million for the survivorship claim and \$2 million for legal fees.

That judgement is the maximum allowed under Ohio law although Magistrate Judge Kandi S. O'Connor indicated that the family could appeal.

"The Court further finds that the Defendants acted with conscious disregard and malice for their actions in relation to the death of Tommy Rauh," Judge Michael wrote.

The [order to pay](#) the \$18 million was signed by Summit County Judge Kathryn Michael.

Whether the Zheng cartel will ever actually pay the \$18 million, based in communist China, remains to be seen.

James Rauh used his son's death to drive change and accountability in the fentanyl crisis by creating [Families Against Fentanyl](#).

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