

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 17, 2018

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to express our extreme concern regarding your seeming lack of commitment to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), which plays a critical role in coordinating the federal government's response to the fentanyl, heroin and opioid epidemic.

On January 14, the Washington Post reported on Taylor Weyeneth, a 24-year-old political appointee who served as Deputy Chief of Staff for ONDCP, despite his complete lack of drug policy experience. Weyeneth had no relevant work experience and only held one full-time job prior to joining the administration – working for the Trump campaign.

As troubled as we are by Weyeneth's appointment, your delay in nominating qualified leaders for ONDCP and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is even more concerning. Both agencies have been without permanent, Senate-confirmed leadership since you took office – and you have not presented the Senate with qualified candidates for these positions. Your first nominee to lead ONDCP withdrew his nomination following severe criticism over his close ties to the pharmaceutical industry, and you have yet to put forward a nominee to lead the DEA. We appreciate the work of the civil servants who are serving as acting heads of ONDCP and DEA, but acting leaders cannot enact the kind of robust response to the ongoing fentanyl, heroin and opioid epidemic that the crisis demands.

You have claimed that the opioid epidemic is a top priority for your administration, but the personnel you have staffing these key agencies – and the lack of nominees to head them – is cause for deep concern. This crisis knows no bounds, and we are committed to working across party lines with anyone who is serious about addressing this devastating epidemic. We hope to work with you, beginning with confirming qualified personnel to these key agencies. To that end, we request that you:

1. Provide our offices with a list of your political appointees to key drug policy positions and those appointees' relevant qualifications, including appointees at ONDCP; the Department of Justice, including the DEA; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); and elsewhere in your administration; and

2. Work with the Senate to nominate and confirm qualified leadership to ONDCP and DEA with an urgency that matches the current crisis, including considering hard-working civil servants who are already in positions of leadership at these agencies.

We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

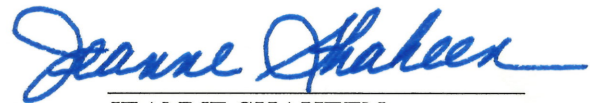

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