



STATE OF FLORIDA

ASHLEY MOODY ATTORNEY GENERAL

December 19, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As I am writing to you today, the national opioid crisis continues to rage. Americans need their elected leaders and policy makers taking unified action against this carnage. In 2009, while you were serving as Vice President, the director of the Office of the National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) was removed from a cabinet-level position to a presidential appointment.¹ In the face of our growing crisis, I am calling on you to reverse that decision.

This departure has left a gaping hole in coordinating our nation's priorities and policies for drug control. Fentanyl is now the number one killer of adults aged 18-45.² It is not only killing adults but teenagers as well. Fentanyl-related deaths among teens increased 168% in 2020, with 680 deaths nationwide—last year, 77% of all teen overdose deaths involved fentanyl.³

The skyrocketing death toll is being fueled by illicit fentanyl manufactured in either China, or with chemicals from China, and smuggled across our southwest border by drug cartels. In your recent meeting with Xi Jinping, you failed to discuss fentanyl or China's role in supplying Mexican drug cartels with the precursors of fentanyl that is flooding our border and killing record numbers of Americans.⁴ This problem will be exacerbated by the expiration of Title 42—where an expected mass migration surge will provide cover for more of this deadly drug to enter the country.

¹ <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-lz1e31hatch194129-downgrading-drug-czar-and-his-of-2009mar31-story.html>

² <https://www.foxnews.com/us/fentanyl-overdoses-leading-cause-death-adults>

³ <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/04/12/1092309418/teen-drug-overdose-deaths-rose-sharply-in-2020-driven-by-fentanyl-laced-pills>

⁴ <https://www.foxnews.com/media/biden-called-failing-bring-covid-chinas-xi-stand-families>

Furthermore, it is jeopardizing the safety of our first responders who may unknowingly come into contact with this substance while they are protecting their communities. Just last week, a Florida police officer had to be treated for a fentanyl overdose after briefly being exposed while conducting a traffic stop.⁵

If you continue to refuse to address this issue on an international level—where certainly ground could be gained—at least step aside and allow a qualified drug czar the authority to act in the best interests of Americans at home. By reestablishing the ONDCP director as a cabinet level position, you can bring more accountability and flexibility to an office that could be better used to stop the influx of deadly fentanyl across the southwest border. It will also elevate the drug czar to a position more suitable to serve as a check on the terrible immigration policies perpetuating this crisis.

This past May, Senator Rick Scott wrote asking you to give the fentanyl crisis proper attention by reinstating the ONDCP director to a cabinet level position.⁶ I join Senator Scott in urging you to reinstate the Director of the ONDCP to your cabinet. You spent your time in the Senate advocating for the ONDCP, even coining the term “drug czar.”⁷ Your failure to take action as President is baffling.

As many Americans come together this holiday season, many of them will be forced to miss their loved ones lost to fentanyl. Synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, killed more than 71,000 Americans alone in 2021 and more than 57,000 in 2020.⁸ It is past time for you to take decisive steps to end this crisis.

Sincerely,



Ashley Moody

Florida Attorney General

⁵ <https://www.foxnews.com/media/florida-police-officer-recounts-fentanyl-poisoning-traffic-stop-felt-like-choking>

⁶ <https://www.rickscott.senate.gov/2022/5/sen-rick-scott-to-biden-give-the-fentanyl-crisis-proper-attention-by-reinstating-cabinet-level-drug-policy-director>

⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/03/17/biden-drug-czar-gupta/>

⁸ https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2022/202205.htm