



State of West Virginia
Office of the Attorney General

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Attorney General

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November 11, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As the Attorney General of West Virginia, I write regarding your Monday meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Bali, Indonesia.

The United States had 107,622 drug deaths in 2021, a 15% increase of 13,967 from 93,655 in 2020. Almost the entirety of the increase is due to fentanyl. West Virginia had 1,194 fentanyl and other synthetic opioid deaths in 2021, up 10% from 1,083 in 2020, after already nearly doubling from 2019 to 2020. This is an absolute disaster, and it will only get worse unless we all work together to stem this unrelenting tide of death.

Fentanyl in the United States comes from ingredients manufactured in China and sent to Mexico, where the ingredients are made into finished fentanyl and trafficked into our country. Currently, "China's insufficient regulatory oversight of the precursor chemical industry, corruption among government and business officials, lower production costs, myriad transportation options, and illegal factories make it an ideal source for precursor chemicals intended for illicit drug production." U.S. Government Accountability Office, *GAO-18-205: Illicit Opioids: While greater Attention Given to Combating Synthetic Opioids, Agencies Need to Better Assess Their Efforts* 18 (Mar. 2018). Troublingly, "[p]erpetrators caught mislabeling precursor shipments [in China] often face only civil penalties and small fines rather than criminal charges." Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* 50 (Mar. 2021). The situation is simply unacceptable.

President Trump raised the fentanyl issue directly with President Xi Jinping, face to face. As you balance the priorities in the relationship of our two countries, I strongly urge you to do the same. We need China to do much more to combat the production of fentanyl, including in particular by regulating the raw ingredients that Mexican drug cartels are using to make fentanyl.

While we have numerous differences, fighting fentanyl should be a bipartisan priority of the highest order. I wish you the best of luck with your upcoming foreign travel, and hope that you can deliver when it comes to the fentanyl problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick Morrissey". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Patrick Morrissey
West Virginia Attorney General