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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

GABRIELLE D'ADAMO SINGER, STAFF DIRECTOR  
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September 11, 2019

The Honorable James Inhofe  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Armed Services  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Armed Services  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Reed:

As you begin conference discussions on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020, I write to request that you maintain sections 6801 through 6837 of the Senate bill, S.1790, in the final conference report. These provisions have strong, bipartisan support and would establish important tools to address the opioid crisis that has devastated communities in Michigan and across the country.

Synthetic opioids have been major contributors to the opioid crisis. From August 2017 to August 2018, 31,900 of the 48,000 deaths from opioid overdoses were caused by synthetic opioids other than methadone. According to the most recent available CDC data, my home state of Michigan saw nearly 50% more synthetic opioid overdose deaths in 2017 than in 2016.

In particular, fentanyl and its analogues have had the most devastating effects in the current crisis. Illicit fentanyl is entering the United States primarily from China and Mexico. China is the world's largest producer of illicit fentanyl, where manufacturers generally ship the drug directly to the United States, in purities of over 90%, or to transnational criminal organizations in Mexico, who then smuggle it into the United States in purities of under 10%. Federal Government officials have estimated that China is responsible for 90% of the illicit fentanyl in the United States.

So far, the United States has sanctioned only one fentanyl trafficking entity, in April 2018, using the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. We need to leverage every tool – including tough sanctions on illicit fentanyl manufacturers and distributors – to help stem trafficking and prevent this lethal drug from illegally entering the United States. In addition, the public pressure that would arise from sanctioning under-regulated Chinese manufacturers could cause China to take further action against these entities itself.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that the Federal Government has the tools it needs to tackle the opioid crisis from every angle.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gary C. Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Gary C. Peters  
Ranking Member  
Senate Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs Committee