

November 24, 2020

The Honorable Joe Biden  
Presidential Transition Office  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden:

We, the undersigned, represent both former drug policy officials in Republican and Democratic administrations as well as the major groups across all disciplines working on a comprehensive response to the drug crisis facing our nation, including prevention, treatment, recovery support, medicine, overdose reversal, law enforcement, and criminal justice reform.

Our nation is undergoing an unprecedented addiction crisis. That is why we are urging a reprioritization of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), including the elevation of the Director to Cabinet-level.

For almost 40 years, you have been one of the most stalwart elected officials advocating for sound drug policy and a robust Office of National Drug Control Policy, with the Director in the Cabinet so that he or she could have the stature to interact with Cabinet heads.

In the early-1980s, despite resistance to the idea by the President and some colleagues, you proposed this idea, which came to fruition in 1988. As you said then:

“That provision (...a Cabinet-level national drug control policy director), to my mind, is the single most important part of this bill, since the new Cabinet officer, as appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, will for the first time provide the Federal Government with a top-level official specifically charged with formulating and implementing, across the full span of Federal anti-drug agencies, a unified national drug-control strategy.” (Congressional Record – Senate, Oct. 21, 1988)

In 2001, you reiterated this during the confirmation of George W. Bush’s director:

“I have argued that Cabinet-level status is necessary to give the position visibility commensurate with the depth of our Nation's drug problem, providing our drug czar the clout to stop interagency feuding, fight for budgetary resources, and decertify inadequate agency drug budgets.” (ONDCP Confirmation, Oct. 10, 2001)

This provision was the right thing to do in 1988 and in 2001. And it’s the right thing for our country now, especially as the opioid epidemic continues to rage. We need a strong ONDCP to lead our government’s efforts to reduce drug use and its consequences—an ONDCP with the budget, authority, and stature to make a difference during these difficult times. We couldn’t agree more with you that “the drug czar must be on equal footing with the rest of the President's Cabinet.” (ONDCP Confirmation, Oct. 10, 2001)

Sincerely,

**Hon. Patrick J. Kennedy**

Former Member of Congress  
Founder, Kennedy Forum for Mental Health

**Kevin A. Sabet, PhD**

President and Co-Founder, Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM)  
Three-time drug policy advisor, Office of National Drug Control Policy

**General Barry R. McCaffrey (Ret.)**

Former Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy

**William J. Bennett, PhD, JD**

Former Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy

**Hoover Adger, Jr., MD, MPH, MBA**

Former Deputy Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy  
Professor of Pediatrics, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

**Bertha Madras, PhD**

Former Deputy Director, Demand Reduction, Office of National Drug Control Policy  
Professor of Psychobiology, Harvard Medical School

**John Carnevale**

Former Director of Programs, Budget, & Evaluation, Office of National Drug Control Policy

**Major General Barrye Price (Ret.)**

President & CEO, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

**Patricia Clay**

Treatment Communities of America

**Robert L. DuPont, MD**

Founding Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)  
Second White House Drug Chief

**Carson Fox**

Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP)

**Director Mike McDaniel**

President, National HIDTA Directors Association (NHDA)

**Hon. Mary Bono**

Former Member of Congress  
Chair & CEO, Mothers Against Prescription Drug Abuse  
Chair-Elect CADCA

**Peter G. Bourne, M.D.**

Founding Director, Office of Drug Abuse Policy (ODAP)

**Charles O’Keeffe**

Deputy Director for International Affairs, Office of Drug Abuse Policy (ODAP)

**David LaBahn**

President & CEO Association of Prosecuting Attorneys

**Mark Dunn**

Public Policy Director, National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers (NAATP)

**Bob Bushman**

President, National Narcotic Officers’ Associations’ Coalition (NNOAC)

**Alan I. Leshner, Ph.D.**

Former Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse  
National Institutes of Health

**Lorraine M. Martin**

President & CEO, National Safety Council (NSC)

**Sis Wenger**

President/CEO, National Association for Children of Addiction (NACoA)

**Melvin Wilson**

Senior Policy Advisor, National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

**Gregory Bunt, MD**

Past President, International Society of Addiction Medicine

**A. Eden Evins, MD, MPH**

Cox Family Professor of Psychiatry in Addiction Medicine, Harvard Medical School

**Paula Riggs, MD**

Director, Addiction Science, Prevention, and Treatment & Vice Chair, Department of Psychiatry  
University of Colorado School of Medicine

**Keith Humphreys, PhD**

Esther Ting Memorial Professor, Stanford University

**Stuart Gitlow, MD, MPH, MBA**

Past President, American Society of Addiction Medicine

**Jessica Hulsey**

President & CEO, Addiction Policy Forum

**Carol Boyer**

National Director, Community and Government Partnerships  
Delphi Behavioral Health Group

**Diana Fishbein**

National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives

**Professor Dr. Dr. (h.c.) Marilyn A. Huestis**

Thomas Jefferson University

**Carol Boyer & Chris Collins**

Co-Chairs, Howard County Recovery Oriented Systems of Care

**Michael Langford**

Regional Vice President, WestCare Georgia

**Gary Mendell**

Founder & CEO, Shatterproof

**Richard Steinberg**

CEO, WestCare Foundation

**Sarah Potter**

Addiction Professionals of North Carolina

**Sue Rusche**

President & CEO, National Families in Action

**Sion Kim Harris, PhD CPH**

Co-Director, Center for Adolescent Behavioral Health Research, Boston Children's Hospital  
Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School

**Randi Schuster, PhD**

Assistant Professor, Harvard Medical School  
Director of Neuropsychology, Center for Addiction Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital

**Jodi Gilman, PhD**

Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School  
Director of Neuroscience, Center for Addiction Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital

**Mary K FitzGerald, JD/MBA**

CEO, Eluna f/k/a The Moyer Foundation

**Mary R. Grealy**

President, Healthcare Leadership Council

**Mitchell S. Rosenthal, MD**

Founder, Phoenix House & President, Rosenthal Center for Addiction Studies

**Creighton Drury**  
CEO, Partnership to End Addiction

**Amy Ronshausen**  
Executive Director, Drug Free America Foundation, Inc.

**Patty McCarthy**  
CEO, Faces & Voices of Recovery

**The Collaborative for Effective Prescription Opioid Policies  
(CEPOP)**

**Chelsea Laliberté Barnes, MSSA, LSW**  
Live4Lali

**Professor Yifrah Kaminer MD, MBA**  
University of Connecticut School of Medicine

**Aaron Weiner, PhD, ABPP**  
Owner, Bridge Forward Group LLC  
Licensed Clinical Psychologist (ABPP)  
Master Addiction Counselor (NAADAC)

**Paul Samuels, JD**  
Director/President, Legal Action Center

**Pamela F. Rodriguez**  
TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities)

**Peter Dsouza MBA, MA, LCADC**  
CEO, Addiction Recovery Inc.

**Debra Pantin**  
Outreach Development Corp.

**Luke J. Nasta, M.P.A., CASAC**  
CEO, Camelot of Staten Island Inc.

**Robert Budsock,**  
CEO, Integrity House

**Mark Cook**  
Drug Free Dickson Coalition

**Pam Birtolo,**  
President, Flagler Open Arms Recovery Services

**Patty Sykstus**  
President, Not One More Alabama

**Carie Wimberly**  
Executive Director, Addiction Prevention Coalition

**Mary Jo McMillen**  
Executive Director, Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness (USARA)

**Brian Evers,**  
Executive Director, Pyramid Life Center

**James A. Greer**  
Chairman, National Drug and Alcohol Screening Association

**Pamela Greenberg, President and CEO**  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

**Lori Robinson M.S.,R.D.**  
Moms Strong, LLC

**Trish Burchette,**  
Certified Prevention Specialist, Alliance of Citizens Together Improving our Neighborhoods  
(A.C.T.I.O.N Coalition)

**Pete Nielsen, CEO**  
Behavioral Health Association of Providers

**Jan Lepore-Jentleson, Executive Director**  
WestCare Ohio (DBA: East End Community Services)

**Robert Carullo**  
Executive Director, Strengthening the Mid-Atlantic Region for Tomorrow (SMART)

**Julie Peterson**  
Executive Director, Foundation for Healthy Generations

**Priscilla Lisicich**  
President, Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention  
(WASAVP)

**Beverly Watts Davis,**  
Chairperson of the Board, Ella Austin Community Center

**Travis Landry**

Regional Vice President, WestCare Wisconsin, Inc.

**Laurel Dudley**

Executive Director, Grand Boulevard Prevention Services

**Howard Lathan**

Associate Director, Chicago Area Project

**Rev. Walter Jones**

Executive Director, Fathers Who Care

West Garfield Park Community Stakeholders

Chair of the National Faith Based Prevention Alliance

**Debbian Fletcher-Blake**

CEO, VIP Community Services, Inc.

**Kathryn Wells, MD**

Executive Director, Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect

Associate Professor, University of Colorado School of Medicine

**Doug Tieman**

President & CEO

Caron Treatment Centers

**Ted N. Strader**

Creating lasting Family Connections

Program Developer

Resilient Futures Network, LLC