

United States Senate

SENATE CAUCUS ON
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL
HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 818-C
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 27, 2023

Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20451

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As the Co-Chairs of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, we applaud your decision to appoint a Department of State (State) envoy to lead the United States' diplomatic efforts to curtail the threat that synthetic drugs pose. As the selection process for the envoy moves forward, we urge you to choose an individual with expertise, not only in counternarcotics, but also in narcotics-related finance – specifically with experience in addressing the challenges related to Chinese Money Laundering organizations, bulk cash smuggling, know-your-customer regulations, and trade-based money laundering – and in anti-corruption practices.

In addition to appointing an envoy with such expertise, State should direct its envoy to consult with partner nations' counternarcotics and relevant anti-money laundering officials to better understand the methodologies used by local drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) to manage the proceeds of the synthetic drug trade. Further, the envoy and its team should have familiarity with the importance of programs to collect and disseminate beneficial ownership and know-your-customer information, as DTOs routinely exploit anonymous shell companies, opaque trade routes, and disparate regulatory regimes to traffic drugs and launder proceeds.

DTOs perpetuate crime, corruption, and death as they traffic synthetic drugs, including fentanyl and methamphetamine. Their activity undermines the rule of law, erodes democratic institutions, and threatens U.S. national security. The U.S. must confront the synthetic drugs crisis in a way that recognizes DTOs for what they are: sophisticated businesses seeking profits. Choosing an envoy who understands how to dismantle DTOs' financial networks, and who prioritizes such efforts, will diminish these networks' capacity to traffic deadly synthetic drugs into the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you and your envoy to dismantle the synthetic drug trade, promote the rule of law, and protect American lives.

Sincerely,

Sheldon Whitehouse
Chairman

Charles E. Grassley
Co-Chairman

CC: Todd Robinson, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State