

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that synthetic opioids (primarily fentanyl-related substances) resulted in over 74,000 overdose deaths between November 2021 and November 2022.<sup>1</sup> Further, while Mexican transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are reportedly a major source of illegally manufactured synthetic opioids, suppliers in the People's Republic of China (PRC) provide most of the necessary precursor chemicals used by these TCOs.

As the PRC continues to assert its role in global governance, often signaling its potential to lead and challenge existing institutions and norms, we urge the Department of State to hold the PRC accountable for its role in the illegal trafficking of synthetic opioid drugs. Insisting to be recognized as a great power on the world stage also means accepting the responsibility that comes with such a title. Thus, we must do more to demand that the PRC assume greater responsibility in the global counternarcotic campaign.

Moreover, we urge the Department to actively pursue robust multi-lateral efforts with our allied partners in Southeast Asia and the Pacific who are also facing illicit trafficking of methamphetamine production and trafficking of meth precursors from China. The PRC's refusal to regulate its pharmaceutical and chemical sectors significantly contributes to this ongoing crisis. Given that the PRC has prioritized biopharmaceuticals as a key sector in its economy, it has a vested interest in allowing these industries to operate with little-to-no oversight or enforcement regulations. However, in order to be recognized for its purported contributions to the global counternarcotic campaign, the PRC must commit to dedicating the necessary resources and personnel to conduct serious oversight of industries that are contributing to this global crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Provisional Drug Overdose Death Counts, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

Should the PRC remain disengaged from this worldwide problem, we urge you to consider sanctioning Chinese pharmaceutical and chemical companies who are shipping dangerous precursors all over the world, especially to Mexican TCOs who continue to manufacture and smuggle fentanyl and other illicit synthetic drugs into the United States.

Congress is fully aware that disruption of the supply chain is only one of the necessary steps we must take to combat this crisis. We must also continue to disrupt illicit fentanyl-related financial flows linked to the PRC if we want to see progress in saving lives. Currently, profits are funneled through PRC-based money-laundering organizations and Mexican TCOs, making it difficult to investigate and disrupt criminal actors. We are concerned, but not surprised, by the lack of PRC engagement in addressing the numerous money laundering and illicit finance facilitators with ties to Chinese criminal organizations that enable drug trafficking.

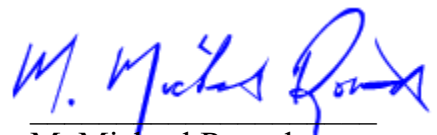
If the PRC insists on self-identifying as a responsible global power, then we must also insist that it be held to the same standards as any responsible developed nation committed to cracking down on the burgeoning global synthetic opioid crisis. We fully support your Department's effort to work through multilateral fora and encourage the PRC to expand its anti-money laundering efforts in order to see robust progress in improved cooperation and accountability to save the lives of American citizens affected by this blight. More importantly, we must continue to utilize every international platform to call out the PRC's bad behaviors and hold them accountable for their role in this global crisis.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Warmest regards,



Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator