

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 21, 2023

The Honorable Janet L. Yellen
Secretary of the Treasury
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretaries Yellen and Blinken:

We are concerned that the Biden Administration's current approach toward Mexico has fundamentally failed to persuade the government of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to counter the growing security threat posed by the Mexican drug cartels. We urge you to use the full range of tools at your disposal—including targeted sanctions and visa bans, especially officials at the state and local level—to encourage the Mexican government to take stronger actions against the cartels and significantly expand counter-narcotics cooperation with the United States, which is at its lowest point in decades across many lines of effort.

Since taking office, the Biden Administration has attempted to stabilize U.S.-Mexico relations by downplaying President López Obrador's provocations and accommodating his insistence on fundamentally renegotiating security cooperation with the United States. President López Obrador has proven unresponsive to the Administration's policy to date. Despite the Executive Branch's overtures and attempts at accommodation, he has clearly made the deliberate choice to pursue a permissive and non-confrontational policy toward the cartels, to turn a blind eye toward pervasive corruption in Mexico, and to downgrade counter-narcotics cooperation with the United States.

President López Obrador's unwillingness to act against the cartels and the breakdown in key lines of effort for counter-narcotics cooperation pose a major and growing threat to the safety and security of the American people. In addition to controlling up to 40 percent of Mexican territory, the cartels also control the primary trafficking corridors into the United States and facilitate the passage of a record number of illegal aliens into our country and almost all of the illicit drugs coming across our border. More than 100,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in the last 12 months alone—the vast majority from synthetic opioids like fentanyl—and drug overdoses are the number-one cause of death for American adults aged 18 to 45. U.S. officials say the Mexican cartels synthesize and traffic almost all fentanyl that ends up on American streets.

We urge the Biden Administration to use expanded sanctions authority as leverage and adopt a more assertive approach. This includes imposing sanctions and visa bans targeting Mexican officials starting at the state and local level of government who directly support or enable the cartels, until López Obrador's Administration resumes support for joint operations, increases intelligence sharing, and escalates pressure against the cartels and their enablers in government. There are a significant number of potential targets for sanctions given the systemic corruption at the state and local level in

Mexico, and these measures would impose serious economic costs and political pressure on the Mexican government for its refusal to take action.

Under the Biden Administration's current policy, the relationship between the United States and Mexico has deteriorated when joint action is most needed. Accommodation alone has failed to spur cooperation, so it is time to use all diplomatic tools at the Executive Branch's disposal to persuade the government of President López Obrador to resume sincere and effective counter-narcotics cooperation and work to eradicate these groups. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Hagerty
U.S. Senator



James E. Risch
U.S. Senator



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Marsha Blackburn
U.S. Senator



Ted Cruz
U.S. Senator



John Barrasso
U.S. Senator