

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

May 20, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20451

The Honorable Scott Bessent  
Secretary of the Treasury  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Rubio and Secretary Bessent:

Instead of continuing to surrender leverage to the People's Republic of China (PRC), I urge you to use all possible diplomatic tools to push the PRC to take meaningful, verifiable action to curb the flow of illicit fentanyl.

Since taking office, the Trump administration has bungled U.S.-China policy, taking a wrecking ball to the very programs that are the foundation of American power at home and abroad and of the success of American workers and innovators. Your misguided trade war has garnered no concessions from the PRC, but has instead poisoned our relationships with key allies, driving them to examine closer economic ties to China over the U.S. You have ceded U.S. influence to China through the destruction of foreign policy and soft power tools like U.S. foreign assistance and U.S. media broadcasting through USAGM and its affiliates including Voice of America and Radio Free Asia. The Trump administration is actively undermining investments in American energy and manufacturing that are critical to out-competing the Chinese Communist Party and ensuring the energy future is Made in America, not in China. The Trump administration is allowing American advanced AI chips to flow to untrusted countries that could be a backdoor way to funnel American technology to China. The Trump administration is also pushing talented researchers away from our shores to other countries and slashing federal research and development that is the bedrock of American competitiveness as the U.S. races to beat China in the industries of the future.

Furthermore, despite waging a trade war with China and our allies like Canada in the name of stopping the flow of fentanyl into the U.S., the Trump administration's budget proposal has shown no such priority in combatting the scourge of fentanyl given its 91% cut to key State Department programming for counternarcotic efforts including on fentanyl through the International Narcotics Control and Enforcement account. All the while, companies in China continue to fuel this crisis by illicitly selling precursor chemicals to buyers in places like Mexico, where it is manufactured and illegally shipped to our most vulnerable communities.

**It is in that context that I write to urge you to resume diplomatic efforts to compel the People's Republic of China to cooperate with the U.S. on efforts to clamp down on the flow of illicit fentanyl precursor chemicals out of China. The United States has a key opportunity to leverage progress over the last several years in securing real and tangible action from the PRC to combat the flow of fentanyl and tackle the devastating impact fentanyl has had on millions in New York and across America.** From my bipartisan travels to push the leadership of PRC and legislative efforts to combat fentanyl, it is clear that sustained diplomatic pressure on the PRC remains an utmost necessity to continue our progress addressing this crisis.

In October 2023, I led a bipartisan Senate delegation to China and met with President Xi and several other high-ranking PRC officials to candidly discuss, among other priorities, the need for China to take much more aggressive action to stop fentanyl precursor chemicals from fueling the synthetic drug crisis in America. Following our Senate delegation, the PRC took several initial steps to address our concerns. These steps from the PRC included: 1. launching with the U.S.-PRC Counternarcotics Working Group to bolster law enforcement and information sharing; 2. issuing notices to its chemical companies against illicit trade in precursor chemicals and pill press equipment, thereby beginning a needed process to enforce its own regulation against illegal trade of these products; 3. taking joint law enforcement action with the United States; and 4. scheduling 46 synthetic drugs and 3 essential fentanyl precursors. These steps – while not comprehensive—carved an important path forward to deliver for the American people suffering from the synthetic drug crisis in America.

The issue of synthetic drug cooperation with the PRC must be maintained as a top priority for U.S.-China policy. The Trump administration's current approach of waging a disastrous and ineffective trade war, while undermining American diplomatic tools, is bearing no results on this pressing issue for the American people. As such, as the full budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2026 is finalized, **I strongly urge you to scrap the misguided 91% cut to the State Department's International Narcotics Control and Enforcement account, and take all diplomatic action possible to push the PRC to take the following additional steps:**

1. **PRC law enforcement action:** The U.S. must push the PRC to take additional law enforcement actions to exert sustained pressure that cracks down on Chinese companies, online marketplaces, and individuals who are involved in illicit precursor chemical and fentanyl trade and publicly announce the results of these actions. These actions are critical to enforcing the activity already deemed illegal by the PRC, and ensuring future actions to schedule or really crack down on activity are taken seriously with real deterrent effect.
2. **Increase precursor scheduling:** Gaps between internationally scheduled precursors and those scheduled by the PRC remain. These gaps harm efforts to stop precursors in their tracks. The PRC should take additional steps to schedule the main precursor chemicals involved in the production of illicit fentanyl and synthetic drugs within China's scheduling system.
3. **Illicit financing:** Money laundering and underground banks used to move illicit profits as part of the illicit synthetic drug trade remains a critical impediment, as exposed by the U.S. Department of Justice in late 2024. The PRC must restrict these illicit financial networks and banks that seek to evade PRC laws.

This is an all-hands-on-deck moment to stop the fentanyl crisis and to nearly eliminate a key diplomatic tool for stopping the PRC fueling this crisis is horribly misguided. I strongly urge you

to continue to work with urgency and commitment to reverse course on this proposed funding cut and use all of your diplomatic tools to push the PRC to take these decisive and meaningful steps to curb the fentanyl crisis. At the same time, Congress will continue to assess our legislative options. We must remain laser focused on disrupting the supply of illicit fentanyl, tackling the broader synthetic drug crisis, and save lives in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" and last name "Schumer" clearly legible.

Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator