

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 17, 2018

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Mark Green
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Tillerson and Administrator Green,

We write to draw to your attention the November 28, 2017 letter signed by over 200 national security professionals who have served, often with distinction, in the State Department, the intelligence community, USAID, and the Pentagon about their experiences of (or serving as witnesses to) incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault inside our national security bureaucracies.

This letter speaks to what we believe remains a critical issue that too many of our national security institutions have been too slow to address: sexual assault and harassment and its effects on the professionalism and effective functioning of those institutions. These incidents and the pervasive culture that all too frequently excuses these behaviors and actions have had serious and detrimental consequences for the careers and lives of those affected - and by depriving the United States of the service of some of our best and brightest, a deep and negative effect on our national security.

To better address this issue, we would urge you to provide the Foreign Relations Committee a review of your current methods for data collection, oversight, reporting structure, victim protections, analysis and anti-sexual harassment training, including employee feedback on these mechanisms and how they are being implemented. In our oversight capacity, we hope to work with you, to review and analyze the data to better understand the scope of the problem we confront as we consider appropriate policy changes to address it.

The November 28 letter contends that training is all too often “erratic” and “irregular,” and that policies often go unnoticed among staff. In our experiences serving on the oversight committee with responsibilities for the Department of State and USAID we concur with this contention. We would urge that you pay special attention to whether anti-harassment training is adequate, how it is implemented, and how it is enforced, in your respective reviews. We also urge you to examine your procedures for disciplinary actions to ensure that those who demonstrate improper behavior are held accountable for their actions.

The letter also calls for a number of reforms including a clear indication that national security leadership will not tolerate certain behavior, ensuring the full accessibility and functioning of “multiple, clear, private” channels to report abuse without fear of retribution, and ensuring sufficiently regular, mandatory, and instructive training for employees and contractors. We would be interested in your thoughts and comments on these potential areas for reform.

We also urge that you each take the opportunity to work with us to determine what additional resources are necessary to ensure that each report and allegation receives proper attention, that your offices are collecting all the relevant data, that cases are addressed in a timely and confidential fashion, and that training is fully implemented across the State and USAID workforce.

At a moment in our country when we are being reminded anew of the scope and challenge of sexual harassment in the workplace, we are rededicating ourselves here in the Senate to addressing this issue in our own ranks. The Legislative branch faces similar challenges and that while we work to address them, we expect the same from executive branch agencies. For our part, in addition to exploring appropriate oversight and legislative action to ensure that you have the resources and focus that you need to address these issues, we also intend to place additional emphasis on these issues in the confirmation process. We intend to ensure that nominees live up to the highest standards of behavior, and will seek commitments regarding how they intend to address sexual harassment and assault if they are confirmed.

Lastly, we note that the abuses, harassment and assaults noted in the November 28 letter are enabled by an environment in which the diversity of our nation - one of our “secret weapons” and competitive advantages as a nation – is not reflected in the national security workforce. This is especially true at the senior levels. At the State Department, for example, women and men enter the Foreign Service in roughly comparable numbers, but only about one-third of our senior Foreign Service Officers are women. Although women comprise a majority of the Civil Service, the Senior Executive Service remains 61% male and 89% white. Similarly disturbing trends come to light when analyzing the salaries, bonuses and expectations of workplace behavior amongst men and women working in national security roles. We still have a long way to go on gender equality in the national security workforce, and encourage you to share with us as well your vision for how you plan to address deficiencies in recruitment, retention and promotion to assure that your national security workforce is equitably balanced.

The members of our national security workforce should not be forced to spend their time and energy combatting harassment and a culture of tolerance for disrespectful behavior. Rather, they should be free to focus on what they do best - working to keep our nation safe. And we know from numerous studies that a more diverse workforce leads to better outcomes. A 2015 McKinsey study found that a more diverse workforce is more successful through improved decision-making, leadership, and financial progress. We know that to be true in the private sector and we know that to be true for government as well.

Mindful that there are myriad challenges and opportunities to better address sexual harassment in the workplace we do not seek nor do we expect you to develop a cookie-cutter approach to these issues. Rather, we call on you to respect the dignity of each member of our national security workforce by ensuring an environment in which each individual is capable of fully contributing his or her talents to our national security, without obstruction.

Sincerely,




Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



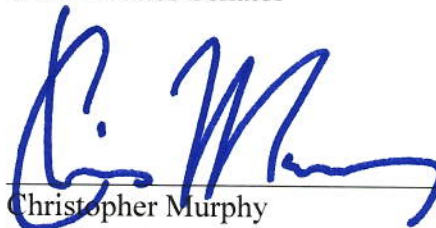
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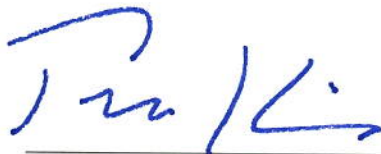
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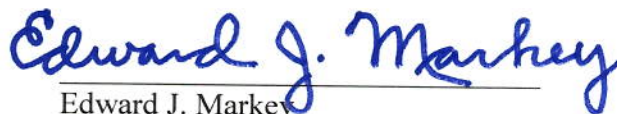
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