

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 7, 2018

The Honorable Mr. Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In anticipation of International Women's Day on March 8, we write to express our ongoing concern over your administration's demotion of the rights of women and girls as a foreign policy priority and efforts to roll back initiatives that have advanced health, prosperity and stability around the world.

Your own recently released National Security Strategy embraces well-established facts, recognizing that "societies that empower women to participate fully in civic and economic life are more prosperous and peaceful." The Strategy commits to "support efforts to advance women's equality, protect the rights of women and girls, and promote women and youth empowerment programs." Given the asserted recognition of the importance of women's empowerment in U.S. foreign policy, we are deeply concerned by your administration's actions that undermine these very goals.

While the Department of State has historically worked with Congress on a range of efforts in this realm, we are dismayed by the Department's overall approach to promoting fundamental human rights as a tenet of American foreign policy and specifically of policies to promote empowering women and girls. The lack of qualified leadership, including vacancies in critical senior level positions and ongoing hemorrhaging of experienced diplomats has created a void that cripples longstanding bipartisan efforts to empower women and girls around the world. Additionally, the decision to cut off all U.S. funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has had a devastating impact on the health of vulnerable women around the world.

Indeed, reported changes to the annual State Department Human Rights Report remove informative indicators of the rights of women and girls, including on access to comprehensive healthcare services, including reproductive health. These indicators provide critical insight into policies that elevate the political, economic, and social status of women and girls, which evidence shows translates into more resilient and peaceful societies that ultimately contribute to a more stable and prosperous world.

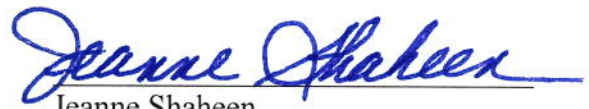
Furthermore, we understand that your administration has removed gender equality integration from the Foreign Affairs Manual (18 FAM 003). This particular FAM directive instructed the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues to coordinate activities with Chiefs of Mission and Department leadership to integrate gender considerations into our diplomacy and global programming. Removing this directive signals a reversal of decades of investment in integrated foreign assistance that promotes gender equality.


Which brings us to a final concern. To maintain American leadership on promoting women's empowerment and gender equality, we strongly encourage you to nominate a qualified Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues with the appropriate background, skills, and commitment to promote the rights of women and girls in U.S. foreign policy and around the globe. The nominee must have a record of successfully articulating and advancing women's empowerment in a global setting, and fully understand how to leverage multiple U.S. government equities and external stakeholders, including international institutions, governments, civil society, private sector partners and community based organizations to implement comprehensive strategies to advance American priorities. These include the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security, the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence, the State Department's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment, and the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls. The Congress should only consider an individual with the ability to perform these functions in a deliberate, non-partisan manner.

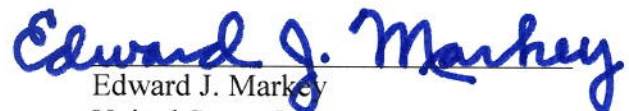
On March 8, 2017, the White House affirmed that the United States is "a leader in promoting women's rights, [and] is deeply committed to empowering women both at home and abroad." The White House committed to work "around the globe to ensure that all women have the opportunity to succeed." While we wholeheartedly agree with these positions, the actions you have subsequently taken run counter to these assertions. As this International Women's Day approaches, we strongly urge you to stand behind your own stated commitments, and encourage you to nominate an effective and knowledgeable nominee for the position of Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.

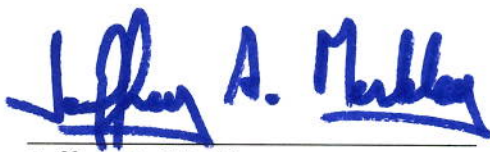
Sincerely,

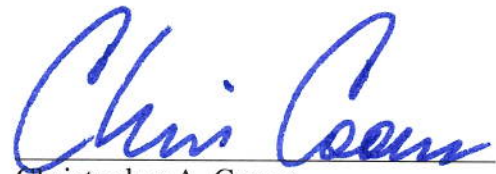
  
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

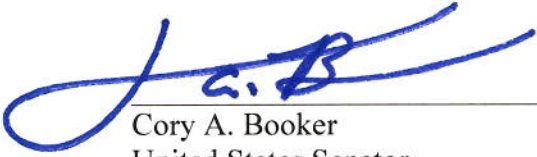
  
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



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Tom Udall  
United States Senator