

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

December 14, 2021

The Honorable Uzra Zeya
Under Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20522

Dear Under Secretary Zeya:

Following your confirmation as Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, we anticipate your appointment as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues is forthcoming in keeping with precedent. Tibet has generated deep bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for several decades. Advocacy for the rights and dignity of the Tibetan people is essential to any principled foreign policy.

As you prepare to assume the duties of the Special Coordinator, we write to convey our thoughts about how the Biden Administration, and Congress, can collaborate to advance U.S. policy on Tibet consistent with U.S. law, including the 2002 Tibetan Policy Act and the 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA):

Engage with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Four of the last five Presidents have hosted His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan religious leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, in the White House, and often multiple times during their presidencies. President Biden can demonstrate the importance of His Holiness' moral message and example by inviting His Holiness to meet in the Oval Office to discuss shared interests and strategies for addressing the world's most pressing problems. If His Holiness is unable to travel, then the President should seek an opportunity to meet with him in India, or send a high-level representative, such as the Vice President or a cabinet official, to do so in his stead.

Deepen engagement with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Exile. Over the last several years, through specific appropriations by Congress, the U.S. government has increased its support for projects to improve the welfare and education of Tibetans in CTA-administered communities in India and Nepal. In April 2021, Tibetans in exile once again chose a new leader through democratic elections. We encourage you to engage the new Sikyong, Penpa Tsering, on ways to improve the livelihoods of Tibetans within the CTA, to protect Tibetan culture and language inside and outside of Tibet, and to resolve the Tibet conflict consistent with Tibetans' aspirations for dignity and freedom.

Religious freedom and the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. The *Tibetan Policy and Support Act* (TPSA) established as U.S. policy that decisions involving the next Dalai Lama are religious in nature and belong solely to him and the Tibetan people. We welcome the Biden

Administration's support of this policy. We urge you, and other administration officials, to publicly reiterate this policy and work with like-minded governments to craft a multilateral strategy to affirm this stance as the international norm, not only as a matter of religious freedom but as a strategic counter to the Chinese Communist Party's and government's claims of ownership to the lands of the Tibetan people and its assertion of control over the religious institution of the Dalai Lama.

Tibetan political prisoners. Tibetans have long been subject to particularly brutal treatment in the Chinese criminal justice system, and contribute disproportionately to the number of political prisoners in China. The Congressional-Executive Commission on China's Political Prisoner Database contains thousands of records of Tibetans detained since the 1980s for political or religious reasons, and currently counts 687 such Tibetans who are known or believed to currently be in detention. We urge you to advocate on behalf of Tibetans detained or imprisoned in the People's Republic of China due to the exercise of their internationally recognized human rights, demanding their release and improved treatment while in custody.

Access to Tibet. We encourage you to fully implement the *Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act*. We look forward to receiving reports required by sections 4(a) and 5(c) that are due this summer, and seek assurances that the State Department is ensuring access to Tibetan areas in keeping with the principle of reciprocity, and considering appropriate responses if such access continues to be denied. Likewise, we note the importance of restoring opportunities for engagement with the Tibetan people inside Tibet and for monitoring of developments on the Tibetan plateau. In Questions-for-the-Record submitted to Secretary Blinken during his January nomination hearing, Senator Rubio expressed concerns about the PRC authorities' closure of the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu, which historically dealt with Tibet issues, in August 2020, and asked Mr. Blinken whether he would establish a Tibet Unit within the Political Section of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing to maintain the work of the consulate, to which Secretary Blinken replied in the affirmative. We ask that you work with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs to ensure that the Secretary's commitment is fulfilled. We also affirm our interest in the establishment of a U.S. consulate in Lhasa as expressed in Section 618 of the TPSA, and encourage you to work with the relevant officials in the Department to accomplish this goal.

Help invigorate a political initiative to put Tibetans back at the table. The last round of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue was held in January 2010. The PRC side has shown no interest in further talks, insisting that the Dalai Lama first meet unreasonable preconditions. Persistent calls from the U.S. and other governments for a resumption of dialogue have failed to produce results. We encourage the U.S. government to engage earnestly with both sides, likeminded partners, and experts to explore novel strategies that could produce forward movement.

Tibet's status. We appreciate that the Tibet section of the 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices does not refer to Tibetan areas as "part of the People's Republic of China." The Chinese government has demanded, as a precondition to dialogue, that the Dalai Lama state that Tibet has been a part of China "since ancient times," which the Dalai Lama has refused to do on the grounds that it is false. The Chinese government has asked several governments to state that "Tibet is part of China," with success, and cited these statements to portray the Dalai Lama as isolated and not representative of the Tibetan people. These actions by the Chinese government

are obstacles to dialogue. Consistent with the State Department's calls for dialogue without preconditions, we urge the continued exclusion of this phrase from future reports and statements, both as a means to promote renewed negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives, and as an opportunity to ground U.S. policy in a respect for historical accuracy and affirm the Tibetan peoples' rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Thousands of Tibetan refugees reside in Nepal without legal status and without a path to acquire such status. They are vulnerable and lack means to assert rights to equal treatment before the law, education, land ownership, freedom of movement, and employment. There has been a frustrating inertia on this issue for decades. We encourage you to work expeditiously with like-minded governments to find solutions to these issues.

Support Tibetan language and culture. Authorities in Tibetan areas of the People's Republic of China continue to force Mandarin instruction and decrease the role of the Tibetan language in educational settings, in tandem with PRC policy directives to promote the "Sinicization" of Tibetan Buddhism. We urge the U.S. government to continue to fund programs, by both the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development, to help Tibetans preserve their language and cultural identity, including exchange and scholarship programs. We also ask you to ensure that Tibetan language training is provided to Foreign Service officers, per the Tibetan Policy Act.

Multilateral coordination. We encourage you to prioritize coordination with likeminded states on policy initiatives pertaining to Tibet, including to promote negotiations on a political resolution as provided for by the TPSA. Such coordination is critical to affirming the right of the Dalai Lama to choose his successor, and important to efforts to monitor and protect the environment on the Tibetan Plateau which is experiencing the effects of rising temperatures, including glacial retreat, changes in the monsoon cycle and the flow of rivers, and desertification.

Tibet matters to us, not only as an issue that is important to our constituents and the Tibetan-American community, but also as a tangible manifestation of a principled foreign policy that prioritizes human rights and the quest for human dignity. We stand ready to work with you on this urgent moral issue.

Sincerely,



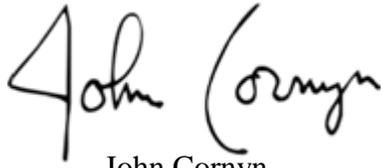
Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



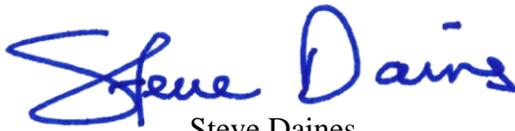
Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator


Marsha Blackburn
U.S. Senator


Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator


John Cornyn
U.S. Senator


Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator


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Roger F. Wicker
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Jeffrey A. Merkley
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Edward J. Markey
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Bernard Sanders
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Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator

Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator

Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator



Gary C. Peters
U.S. Senator



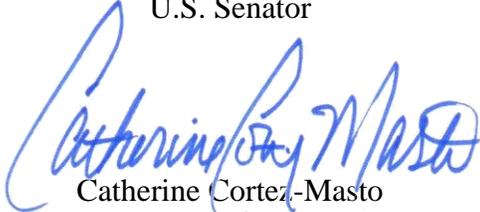
Jon Tester
U.S. Senator

/s/

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
U.S. Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



Catherine Cortez-Masto
U.S. Senator



Raphael Warnock
U.S. Senator