



# NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

JONATHAN F. THOMPSON  
Executive Director and CEO

August 8, 2018

The Honorable Donald Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

I write on behalf of more than 3,000 elected Sheriffs nationwide to let you know of law enforcement's concern with the Department of Health and Human Services' July 19<sup>th</sup> directive that the Food and Drug Administration "establish a working group to examine how to safely import prescription drugs from other countries."<sup>i</sup>

This is not the first time that Sheriffs have felt compelled to voice their fears about drug importation. In 2017, the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) passed a resolution that "opposes drug importation legislation which jeopardizes law enforcement's ability to protect the public health and endangers the safety of law enforcement and other first responders."<sup>ii</sup>

And this concern of local Sheriffs is also shared by knowledgeable others with a national perspective.

The three *Key Findings* of a 2017 report on drug importation by former FBI Director Louis Freeh were that: (1) Drug importation would increase the threat of illegitimate products entering the United States, fueling criminal organizations' activities and profits; (2) Drug importation proposals would worsen the opioid crisis – a crisis that has already grown substantially worse due to the powerful opioid fentanyl and fentanyl analogue-laced counterfeit pills being produced by illegal trafficking organizations, including in China, and reaching the United States through Canada and Mexico, and; (3) Already overburdened law enforcement and regulatory capacity would be unable to ensure a safe prescription drug supply under importation.<sup>iii</sup>

Similarly, a March 16, 2017 open letter to Congress from the four most recent Commissioners of the Food and Drug Administration cited five reasons for their opposition to drug importation: (1) Serious risks to patients and consumers; (2) Drugs purchased from foreign countries may be substandard, unsafe, adulterated, or fake; (3) The FDA lacks the resources

needed to oversee a major importation program; (4) The global drug supply will limit improvement in access, and; (5) Any improved access and cost savings resulting from importation are likely to be minimal.<sup>iv</sup>

Thus, on behalf of the Sheriffs of America, the National Sheriffs' Association respectfully requests that your Administration carefully weigh the potential harmful impact of drug importation on public safety and public health; and, while continuing to seek options "to lower drug prices and put American patients first," that the Administration take drug importation off the table of consideration.

Respectfully,



Jonathan F. Thompson  
Executive Director and CEO

cc: The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D., Food and Drug Administration  
Ms. Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to the President  
Acting Director Jim Carroll, Office of National Drug Control Policy

<sup>i</sup> *HHS Secretary Azar Directs FDA to Establish Working Group on Drug Importation to Address Price Spikes*, <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2018/07/19/hhs-secretary-azar-directs-fda-establish-working-group-drug-importation-address-price-spikes.html>.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.sheriffs.org/sites/default/files/Resolution%202017%20-%207%20Drug%20Importation%20June%202017.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> Freeh Group International Solutions, LLC (June 2017), *Report on the Potential Impact of Drug Importation Proposals on U.S. Law Enforcement*, [https://storage.googleapis.com/m1738/20170605\\_Report%20on%20Counterfeit%20Drugs.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/m1738/20170605_Report%20on%20Counterfeit%20Drugs.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> [https://healthpolicy.duke.edu/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2017\\_03\\_16\\_commissioners\\_letter\\_final\\_signed.pdf](https://healthpolicy.duke.edu/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2017_03_16_commissioners_letter_final_signed.pdf)