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February 13, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

I write about the Uyghur people and to ask you to take prompt action to reverse decisions that are harmful to their moral cause.

When you and I served as co-chairs of the Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) in the 116th Congress, we accomplished much on behalf of the Uyghur people. The Commission held a hearing and issued a staff report revealing the system of forced labor to which the Chinese government was subjecting Uyghurs and other predominantly Turkic Muslim people, as part of a pattern of gross human rights violations committed against these people, which your predecessors at the State Department determined to constitute crimes against humanity and genocide.

This effort led to the enactment in 2021 of our bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, one of the most impactful pieces of human rights legislation enacted to date in the 21st century, which was made possible in great part due to your advocacy for it in Congress. The 116th Congress also saw enactment of your bipartisan Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, which among other measures authorized sanctions against Chinese government officials complicit in human rights abuses against Uyghurs. Working with the bipartisan leadership of the CECC, we were able to reauthorize this important law at the end of 2024.

Given this record of leadership for the cause of the Uyghur people, it is baffling to see that you appointed Darren Beattie, a Uyghur genocide denier, to be Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, a position in which he is responsible for the tone and content of America's public messaging to the world.

As you were working in spring 2021 to pass the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in the Senate by citing the State Department's genocide determination, Mr. Beattie wrote "the Chinese aren't genocidal. They object to Uyghur supremacy and Uyghurness." He later wrote that "If Uyghurs don't like anti-Uyghur racism, it must be because they are Uyghur nationalists who think all of China is for Uyghurs only."

From your work on the CECC, you know that what Mr. Beattie says is false and bigoted. It must have been devastating, demoralizing and incomprehensible for Uyghurs to learn that you rewarded Mr. Beattie with this appointment.

Mr. Beattie's views on Uyghurs are of a kind with his views on the PRC. A February 7 article in NOTUS documented multiple instances where Mr. Beattie praised the brutal and repressive conduct of the Communist Party-led government of China as a model for the United States and other Western nations.

In addition, I am very concerned that the suspension of foreign assistance funds that you have ordered is having a negative impact on Uyghurs. Funding provided by the State Department has supported a wide array of activities to help Uyghurs, including documentation of grave human rights abuses, including crimes against humanity and genocide, tools to help Uyghurs preserve their language and culture, and humanitarian assistance. The funding freeze not only stops these activities but also puts at existential risk the sustainability of Uyghur and other non-governmental organizations who do this work. These groups are already targets of Chinese intimidation and transnational repression. It is disheartening to see the U.S. government, due to your decision, add to the risks they face.

The appointment of Mr. Beattie and the funding freeze can only have been welcomed by Chinese government and Communist Party officials in Beijing. If the funding freeze were to put Uyghur NGOs out of business, your decision would provide tangible benefit to Chinese aims.

There are few foreign policy issues that have garnered as much broad bipartisan support as the Uyghur issue. This is because their plight is compelling and their cause is just. It is dismaying, and frankly outrageous, to have the Secretary of State undercut that legacy of bipartisan support and hang the Uyghur people out to dry.

In that light, as your close partner on the Uyghur Foreign Labor Prevention Act and on behalf of the Uyghurs whose cause we have championed, I strongly urge you to

- rescind the appointment of Uyghur genocide denier Darren Beattie and dismiss him from his position; and
- end the suspension of foreign assistance and allow Uyghurs to continue to benefit from the generosity and moral commitment of the American people.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress