



April 17, 2018

Dr. Scott Gottlieb  
Commissioner  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
10903 New Hampshire Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Dr. Gottlieb:

Thank you for your advocacy to secure the global postal system and cut off the pipeline of illicit drugs from abroad. Your efforts – increasing the number of inspectors at international mail facilities and improving the technologies used by customs officials – have been positive steps to address the deadly crisis. However, there’s still so much more we must do. As you recently mentioned in an interview with [CNBC](#), we urgently need more resources (and more data) to effectively screen the immense volume of inbound international packages in order to keep illicit drugs out of our country.

Under your leadership, the FDA has improved its screening efforts and now targets suspicious packages using information about their origin and intended recipients. However, according to [Customs and Border Protection](#), information submitted by foreign posts is often inaccurate or incomplete. We must improve our capacity to collect high-quality, accurate information to truly keep our communities safe – and we can do that by requiring advance electronic data (AED) on all packages shipped from abroad.

Every year, nearly [500 million](#) packages reach the United States through the global postal system, and of that sum, approximately 64 percent – 318 million packages – reach Americans’ mailboxes virtually unscreened. Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection officers have publicly stated that requiring AED on all packages would help federal law enforcement identify dangerous packages shipped through the global postal system. Requiring advance electronic data on all inbound international packages would help stop the influx of drugs from abroad.

President Trump and numerous lawmakers have called for the widespread use of AED, noting its utility in the fight against synthetic opioids. In Congress, the Synthetics Trafficking and Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act continues to gain widespread bipartisan support in both chambers –but the bill still has not been brought to a vote, and little has been done to close this dangerous loophole.

In its final [report](#), the President’s Commission on Combatting Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis urged President Trump to support the STOP Act, and for the federal government to work with the international community to implement the policy in accordance with international laws

and treaties. While President Trump has yet to formally endorse the STOP Act, the Trump Administration's recently released [opioid plan](#) set a goal to require AED on 90-percent of inbound international packages within the next three years. That is a worthy goal and should be applauded, but as the nation's opioid epidemic continues to worsen, we should strive to require AED on *all* inbound international packages to help keep our communities safe.

As a doctor and dedicated public servant, it's clear that ensuring the health and safety of the American people has been a critical aspect of your life's work. As you continue to call for improved security measures in the global postal system, I implore you to use your platform to make sure our elected officials do all that they can to protect the safety of the American people.

On behalf of Americans for Securing All Packages and the many families that have been ravaged by the opioid crisis, I ask you to work with President Trump and Congress to ensure that the STOP Act is passed and signed into law this year.

We must close this postal loophole to keep Americans safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Ridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Governor Tom Ridge  
First Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Senior Advisor to Americans for Securing All Packages