



City of Everett
Office of the Mayor
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PRESS RELEASE

Monday, October 16, 2017

MAYOR DEMARIA CALLS ON CONGRESS TO ACT ON THE OPIOID CRISIS

On Tuesday, Mayor Carlo DeMaria called upon President Trump and Congress to ensure that the Nations Drugs Czar be free of financial or other connections to the prescription drug distribution industry. The Mayor also called on Congress to repeal and replace the law passed in April of 2016 that stripped the Drug Enforcement Agency of critical enforcement authority, barring certain drug companies from the distribution when they flagrantly violated laws to protect the public.

Mayor DeMaria wrote... “I am no stranger to the utterly destructive effects of the opioid addiction epidemic that has touched my community, the communities around us, and communities all across our country. That is why I was utterly outraged to watch this past Sunday’s 60 Minutes segment.”

Mayor DeMaria’s letter comes on the heels of a Washington Post and 60 Minutes investigation, detailing how drug distributors successfully lobbied Congress to strip the federal Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) of its authority to prosecute the unlawful large-scale distribution of prescription opioids to “pain clinics” that emerged overnight in small towns.

Today, Representative Tom Marino of Pennsylvania’s 10th congressional district and lead congressional champion of the 2016 law, withdrew from consideration as President Trump’s nominee as the country’s next drug czar, or leader of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Below is Mayor DeMaria’s letter to the President and Congress:

Dear Mr. President, Senator Warren, Senator Markey, and Congressman Capuano:

As mayor of the City of Everett, Massachusetts, I am no stranger to the utterly destructive effects of the opioid addiction epidemic that has touched my community, the communities around us, and communities all across our country. Opioid addiction remains a public health crisis and perhaps the most complex and vexing social problem of our time.

That is why I was utterly outraged to watch this past Sunday’s 60 Minutes segment, detailing how drug distributors successfully lobbied Congress to strip the federal Drug

Enforcement Agency (DEA) of its authority to prosecute the unlawful large-scale distribution of prescription opioids to “pain clinics” that emerged overnight in small towns. I am pleased to see that one of the lead congressional champions of the law to gut the enforcement authority of the DEA, Representative Tom Marino of Pennsylvania’s 10th congressional district, has just this morning withdrawn from consideration for the position of the country’s next drug czar, or leader of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

I am writing to you today to respectfully yet urgently request that:

- 1. The next nominee for the nation’s drug czar be free of financial or other connections to the prescription drug distribution industry, and be of unassailable professional and personal character; and*
- 2. That Congress repeal and replace the April 2016 law, passed through a parliamentary procedure without debate, that stripped the DEA of critical enforcement authority; the new law must give the DEA the authority to protect the interests of the public and simply cannot be bought and paid for by the legal drug distribution industry. It should go without saying that the law must be fully vetted and debated on the floor of Congress with a roll call vote.*

Let me take a moment to tell you about the effects of the opioid epidemic here in Everett. For the past several years, I and the members of my community have attended the funerals of friends, and the funerals of the children of friends, with sickening regularity. These lives have been lost too soon to addiction, and each loss is a tragedy for not only the family and friends of the individual lost, but for our entire tight-knit community. The loss of any one person changes so many lives and each and every time, the effects of that loss spread throughout the city and are felt for decades to come.

And so we all do what we can in our community. The families of those who have suffered such loss mobilize to support other families coping with addiction, hoping to prevent the loss of yet another life. Vigils are held, and screenings of documentaries, conferences on best practices. We talk to our children, to our neighbors, about the risks of misusing prescription opioids. We hire social workers to complement the work of our first responders, trying to offer help to those who overdose by meeting them where they are. Our firefighters report to us that they now respond to more overdose calls than to any other type of call. We launch programs designed to address all of the components of this public health crisis, from prevention to intervention to treatment to recovery. We invest time, money, and our deepest hopes that through all these efforts, we can stem the tide of addiction-related fatalities.

What we need and demand on the federal level is a Congress that will prioritize our families over the drug industry, a DEA with the enforcement authority and tools it needs to crack down on illegal corporate drug activity; and a drug czar committed to helping us in our fight instead of supporting industry profit at the expense of our children. I hold these convictions at my core and am deeply committed to trying to end the opioid epidemic. I am happy to speak with you about any of these points, and want to help you in this fight in any way I can.

Sincerely,

Carlo DeMaria
Mayor

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