

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Steve Scalise  
Republican Whip  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Hoyer, and Whip Scalise:

We write as leaders of the Blue Dog Coalition who believe the United States should craft and conduct national security policy in a way that protects our interests, promotes our values, and—to the greatest extent possible—reflects bipartisan agreement between Democrats and Republicans. We are strongest internationally when we are united domestically, and weakest on the global stage when we are divided along partisan lines. Our adversaries, whether they are nation-states or non-state actors, recognize this fact. They seek, in a variety of ways, to turn Americans against one another. We should be hyper-vigilant not to let them succeed.

We also believe that the U.S.-China relationship—a complex mix of competition and cooperation—is arguably the most consequential bilateral relationship in the world. U.S. policymakers in the executive and legislative branches should approach the relationship in a strong, smart, and strategic way. We should stand up for American lives, interests and values whenever they are threatened, while avoiding overheated rhetoric that could undermine those goals.

For our part, we have respect for the Chinese people and admiration for the country’s culture and traditions. We also value the contributions that Chinese-Americans have made in this country over generations. At the same time, we have profound concerns about the direction of Chinese policy under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), especially its foreign and defense policy, its trade policy, and its human rights record.

Our concerns have only intensified in light of the Chinese government’s mishandling of the COVID-19 epidemic, which originated in China and has had severe health and economic effects in virtually every country. The Chinese government—true to form—has refused to honestly acknowledge its central role in the emergence and spread of the virus, and has bullied individuals and nations that have called for a full and fair accounting of events to reduce the chance they will

be repeated. We cannot let the Chinese government's campaign of dishonesty and disinformation continue without consequence, especially when it is placing American lives in danger.

In light of the foregoing, we would like to respectfully make three requests.

First, the Blue Dog Coalition has endorsed bipartisan legislation, H.R. 6429, which would create an independent commission on COVID-19, along the lines of the successful 9/11 Commission. While Commission members would mainly assess our own country's preparation for and response to COVID-19, which has been deficient in key respects, it would also examine the Chinese government's many errors of commission and omission, as well as the United States' over-reliance on China for critical supplies. We ask that you include H.R. 6429, or language resembling it, in a future bill.

Second, we support a federal inquiry into how the CCP might seek to exploit the epidemic to advance its foreign policy objectives to the detriment of the United States and our allies. Congress should direct the U.S. national security establishment to prepare and publish this analysis in both classified and unclassified form. This legislative directive could be contained in the forthcoming National Defense Authorization Act, the State-Foreign Operations appropriations bill, or the Defense appropriations bill. We look forward to working with you on this matter.

Finally, we regret the decision to establish a partisan "China Task Force" that politicizes an otherwise largely bipartisan area of policy. The Task Force's partisan nature undermines its potential effectiveness and sends the wrong message to government authorities in Beijing. We appreciate that there are already two congressionally-created commissions—the Congressional-Executive Committee on China and the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission—that analyze and make recommendations to Congress on various aspects of the China challenge. Like these commissions, the "China Task Force" lacks legislative authority.

We urge Democratic and Republican leaders to work together to prioritize House consideration of tough, smart, and bipartisan legislation on China, using the existing committee structure and undertaking any other mutually-agreeable effort to enhance information-sharing and cooperation on cross-jurisdictional matters. If such an effort were to be adopted by House leadership, we know many Blue Dogs would welcome it and be eager to participate.

It is imperative for Members of Congress to work across party lines if we want to influence Chinese policy and to hold the CCP accountable when its actions cross the line, as they have in the case of COVID-19. If we retreat to our partisan corners, we will only weaken the United States, strengthen China, and play into the hands of those who want China to replace the United States as the world's preeminent power.

Sincerely,



Rep. Stephanie Murphy  
Co-Chair for Administration  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Tom O'Halleran  
Co-Chair for Policy  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. J. Luis Correa  
Co-Chair for Communications  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Anthony Brindisi  
Co-Chair for Whip  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Kurt Schrader  
Co-Chair  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Kendra S. Horn  
Co-Chair  
National Security Task Force  
Blue Dog Coalition



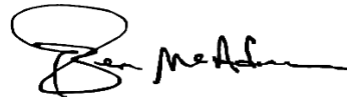
Rep. Max Rose  
Co-Chair  
National Security Task Force  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Abigail D. Spanberger  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Joe Cunningham  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Ben McAdams  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Josh Gottheimer  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



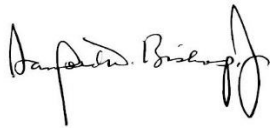
Rep. Charlie Crist  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Jim Costa  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Daniel W. Lipinski  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Vicente Gonzalez  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Xochitl Torres Small  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition



Rep. Henry Cuellar  
Member  
Blue Dog Coalition

cc: The Honorable Eliot L. Engel, Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
The Honorable Michael T. McCaul, Ranking Member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
The Honorable Adam Smith, Chairman, House Committee on Armed Services  
The Honorable Mac Thornberry, Ranking Member, House Committee on Armed Services  
The Honorable Richard E. Neal, Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means  
The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means  
The Honorable Adam B. Schiff, Chairman, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence  
The Honorable Devin Nunes, Ranking Member, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence