

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 2, 2019

## VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary  
United States Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

As you are aware, on April 24, 2018, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on the subject of international parental child abduction. One of the focal points of this hearing was the State Department's consistent failure to use all of the tools available to it under the Sean and David Goldman Act to bring American children home. Specifically, the Committee expressed concern that year after year the State Department refuses to go beyond issuing ineffective demarches. We write to you today to again urge that you use all the tools available under the Goldman Act to bring our American children home to their parents.

Every year several hundred American children are abducted to another country by a taking parent. As you well know, child abduction can have devastating effects on a child's mental, physical and emotional well-being. As the State Department's own annual reports make clear, children who are abducted by one parent experience isolation from their family members, friends, and classmates.

When Congress enacted the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014, we specifically gave the State Department a number of tools to pressure foreign governments to bring home abducted children. These tools—ranging from official public statements and condemnations to the withdrawal of development assistance—are meant to be used in an escalating fashion with one purpose: securing the return of American children. Congress never intended the State Department to simply use demarches—and demarches only—as the sole and exclusive means of securing a child's return.

Unfortunately, a comprehensive review of past annual reports shows that the State Department rarely, if ever, goes beyond issuing a demarche. A review of annual reports from 2014 through 2018 shows your Department issued multiple demarches to countries that continually harbor taking parents. In some cases, some countries were issued multiple demarches in a single year. In 2017, Japan alone was issued three demarches, but no additional, formal action was taken to address the problem of parental child abduction to Japan.

The 2018 annual report and subsequent action report demonstrate the State Department *is still failing* to use all of the tools necessary to secure the return of our American children even though multiple hearings the Senate and House have rejected the demarches-only approach. This

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approach is clearly failing. The number of children kidnapped from and then returned to the U.S. has shown no measurable improvement over the years. Simply issuing demarches, raising cases with foreign government officials and empty threats are not bringing children home.

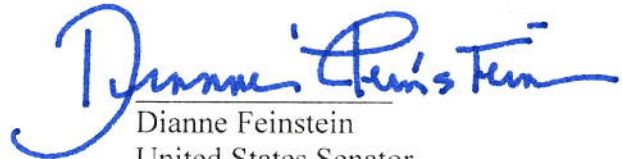
For all of these reasons, we write to you today to again urge the Department of State to use all the tools and resources at its disposal to bring these abducted children home. As United States Senators, we cannot simply sit by and watch the State Department continue to issue ineffective demarches while countries continue to shelter those who abduct our citizen-children. We are committed to ensuring the return of *every* American child abducted abroad and we will not stop working on their behalf.

We hope you recognizing the seriousness of the issue and will make it one of your top priorities. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Brad Watts with Senator Tillis at 202-224-6342 or Katharine Clark with Senator Feinstein at (202-224-7703.

Sincerely,



Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator