



December 10, 2020

To the Biden Transition Team:

I would like to express my strong support for the nomination of Patrick Kennedy as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

Patrick has the skill set, the background, and the broad connections throughout the national behavioral health community to make him an ideal candidate for this position. During his time in Congress – and increasingly in the years since that time – he has proven himself to be one of the nation’s most passionate and gifted leaders in this space.

I consider Patrick to be a friend and cherished colleague. I believe that his lived experience and recovery narrative, along with his policy expertise and past government experience, comprise a unique resume that make him the strongest possible candidate for this role in the Biden Administration. The depth and breadth of his experience in our field and with the federal agencies with which he would most closely interact is unmatched.

In addition, Patrick understands the urgency of the need to revive and reinvigorate ONDCP’s reputation and work portfolio. We feel this urgency not just because we need to rebuild our nation’s efforts in drug abuse prevention and treatment, but because the lack of attention to the drug overdose epidemic has cost us too many lives in recent years. And so many of the resulting high treatment costs and premature deaths have been preventable.

There is a close relationship between mental health conditions and substance use conditions. And both are connected to overall physical health. It is a core element of Mental Health America’s advocacy that behavioral health is a part of overall health and that we cannot continue to treat behavioral health conditions differently from the way we prevent and treat other health conditions.

Patrick understands and articulates this imperative. He is oriented toward action in this space. His thinking is in alignment with President-elect Biden’s. And he will help the Biden Administration hit the ground running in ways no one else could.

I deeply appreciate your consideration of Patrick Kennedy’s nomination as Director of ONDCP and can be reached at [pgionfriddo@mhanational.org](mailto:pgionfriddo@mhanational.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Gionfriddo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Gionfriddo  
President and CEO