United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

We are writing today regarding the recently created vacancy on the Homeland Security Council (HSC) created by the departure of Homeland Security Advisor, Tom Bossert. As our nation continues to recover from recent natural disasters, and as the 2018 hurricane season approaches, we urge you to hire a replacement advisor who takes seriously the role of climate change in triggering severe weather events that threaten the safety and security of our nation.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 established the HSC within the Executive Office of the President to "advise the President on homeland security matters."[1] The HSC is statutorily authorized to make recommendations to the President regarding "the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States in the interest of homeland security" and "oversee and review homeland security policies of the Federal Government."[2] Members of the HSC include the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, and "such other individuals as may be designated by the President."[3] Last year, you announced that the Homeland Security Advisor would be a regular attendee of both HSC meetings and meetings of the National Security Council.[4]

As you know, in his role as Homeland Security Advisor, Mr. Bossert was responsible for overseeing your Administration's response to natural disasters—including hurricanes. In 2017, a number of strong hurricanes struck the United States, devastating communities across the nation. Hurricane Harvey hit Texas on August 25, 2017, causing the temporary displacement of nearly 39,000 residents across Texas and Louisiana.[5] Within weeks, two powerful hurricanes—Irma and Maria—struck the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Florida. The storms caused widespread destruction, particularly in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.[6] The National

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[1] 6 U.S.C. § 491, 492 (online at https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/6/491).
[2] 6 U.S.C. § 494 (online at https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/6/494).
[3] 6 U.S.C. § 493 (online at https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/6/493).
[4] *See* President Donald J. Trump, National Security Presidential Memorandum (April 4, 2017) (online at https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/national-security-presidential-memorandum-4/).
[5] Kimberly Amadeo, "Hurricane Harvey Facts, Damage and Costs," *The Balance* (February 13, 2018) (online at: https://www.thebalance.com/hurricane-harvey-facts-damage-costs-4150087); National Hurricane Center, "National Hurricane Center Tropical Cyclone Report – Hurricane Harvey" (online at: https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL092017_Harvey.pdf).
[6] Eric Levenson, "3 Storms, 3 Responses: Comparing Harvey, Irma and Maria," *CNN* (September 27, 2017) (online at: https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/26/us/response-harvey-irma-maria/index.html).

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) ranked Hurricanes Harvey, Maria, and Irma as the second, third, and fifth most costly hurricanes on record, respectively.[7]

Unfortunately, catastrophic hurricanes like Harvey, Maria, and Irma are likely to become more common as climate change causes hurricanes to become more intense, carry more rain, and cause worse flooding due to sea level rise and warmer water temperatures.[8] However, in his role as Homeland Security Advisor, Mr. Bossert refused to acknowledge the overwhelming scientific consensus that human-induced climate change contributes to severe weather events. While commenting on the federal response to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, for example, Mr. Bossert stated that your Administration takes the issue of climate change "seriously," but "not the cause of it but the things that we observe," and that "causality" was "outside of [his] ability to analyze" in the midst of the hurricane response.[9] These evasive comments defy logic when one considers that Congress observed unequivocally in the most recent National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that "climate change is a direct threat to the national security of the United States,"[10] and referenced our Intelligence Community's assessment from September 2016 that "many countries will encounter climate-induced disruptions—such as weather-related disasters, drought, famine, or damage to infrastructure—that stress their capacity to respond, cope with, or adapt."[11]

Without a dedicated federal effort to reduce the quantity of greenhouse gasses that human activity releases into the atmosphere, climate change will continue to worsen and cause increasingly severe weather events, including hurricanes. Climate change is having and will have a tangible and harmful impact on our national security and disaster readiness.

It is critical that those advising you on homeland security, including your Homeland Security Advisor, take seriously both the causes and observable results of human-induced climate change. As you seek a replacement for Mr. Bossert, we urge you to hire an advisor who recognizes the role of climate change in severe weather events and other matters affecting homeland security.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

[7] National Hurricane Center, "Costliest U.S. tropical cyclones tables updated" (online at: https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/news/UpdatedCostliest.pdf)

[8] Brian Resnick, "Hurricane season 2017: what the hell just happened?," *Vox* (November 30, 2017) (online at: https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/10/25/16504488/hurricane-season-2017-what-the-hell); Phillip Klotzbach and Michael Bell, "Summary of 2017 Atlantic Tropical Cyclone Activity and Verification of Authors' Seasonal and Two Week Forecasts," *Colorado State University* (November 30, 2017) (online at: https://tropical.colostate.edu/media/sites/111/2017/11/2017-11.pdf).

[9] Adam Kelsey, "White House declines to say if climate change may have been a factor in recent hurricanes," *ABC News* (September 11, 2017) (online at http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/white-house-declines-climate-change-factor-recent-hurricanes/story?id=49774639).

[10] "H.R.2810 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018," P.L. 115-91 (Dec. 12, 2017) (online at: https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2810/text).

[11] *Id.*