

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 10, 2017

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

Dear Mr. President,

North Korea's rapidly accelerating development and testing of nuclear weapons and missiles capable of delivering them anywhere on earth is a growing and unacceptable threat to the peace and security of East Asia, America, and the entire world. While the challenge of reaching agreement to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula is daunting at best, we are gravely concerned that your inflammatory rhetoric toward North Korea has brought the United States and the world dangerously close to a conventional war that would likely kill hundreds of thousands of people, or even millions in the event of a nuclear war, including many thousands of Americans.

We write to urge you in the strongest possible terms to lead a vigorous, sustained American diplomatic campaign to defuse the current Korean Crisis and resolve its underlying causes without starting a war that would make matters much worse.

We were encouraged on September 30, 2017, to hear Secretary of State Rex Tillerson say, during his visit to China, that the United States is engaged in ongoing direct communication with North Korea's government. But the next morning we were disappointed when you tweeted a strong rebuke at the Secretary, seemingly dismissing the very plausibility of a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Korea. We strongly believe that any realistic diplomatic strategy must include the kind of preliminary talks described by Secretary Tillerson as a critical step to create conditions for negotiations to halt North Korea's nuclear and missile programs with a view toward subsequent negotiations to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, whether through the Six Party Talks or an alternative format. We look forward to receiving a classified briefing from your administration on the status and prospects of direct talks with North Korea.

To date, your policy of "Maximum Pressure and Engagement" has consisted primarily of pressure through inflammatory rhetoric and efforts to toughen United Nations sanctions. Without a doubt, our forces must continue to deter aggression and stand ready to decisively respond to any attack against the United States or our allies, and to move diplomacy forward it must be backed by sanctions that cut off Pyongyang's critical resources and influence its decision-making. But applying pressure while publicly dismissing the possibility of a diplomatic solution is counterproductive. A successful diplomatic strategy must combine pressure with talks to convince the North Korean leader that we are not a threat and that he does not require nuclear weapons to survive.

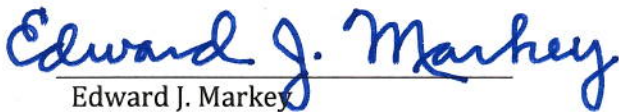
While North Korea's true motives are difficult to discern, open source intelligence community assessments conclude that it is developing nuclear weapons as part of a rational strategy that it believes is necessary for self-defense. Decades of animosity underline this

suspicion, which pressure without talks will only reinforce. We, along with our allies and partners, must insist that North Korea take immediate steps to halt its nuclear and missile programs to create conditions for meaningful negotiations on denuclearization and broader security issues that can achieve consequential results. However, the United States should also be willing to explore possible diplomatic pathways that further our understanding of North Korea's motivations and how to best achieve arrangements that advance U.S. national security interests and regional stability.

A peaceful resolution of the current crisis and successful, negotiated denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula depend on your full and energetic support. This must include immediate action to fill key diplomatic and national security posts in the region, including our Ambassador to South Korea and Assistant Secretaries of State and Defense responsible for East Asia policy, and ensuring that they have all of the personnel and resources they require to do their jobs.

Ultimately, Mr. President, a diplomatic solution requires your full moral support, and that of the public office you hold. The world is looking to the United States for steady, responsible leadership to resolve this crisis without a war that would cost so many lives. Congress stands ready to help you in this endeavor, but it must start with your administration putting forward a comprehensive strategy that puts diplomacy first, building momentum behind that strategy, and seeing it through to success. The path forward is not easy, but no effort could be more important or more worthwhile, and we urge you to embark on it without delay.

Sincerely,



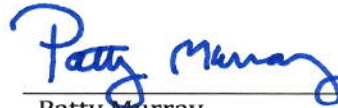
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



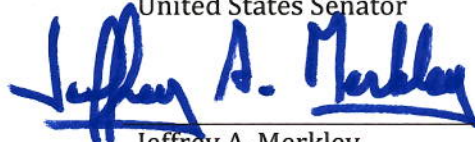
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
U.S. Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable James N. Mattis
U.S. Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310

The Honorable Nikki Haley
U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10017