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November 10, 2014

Senator Patrick Leahy
Chairman,
Senate Judiciary Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Charles Grassley
Ranking Member,
Senate Judiciary Committee
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

The Legal Action Center is the only non-profit law and policy organization in the United States whose sole mission is to fight discrimination against people with histories of addiction, HIV/AIDS, or criminal records, and to advocate for sound public policies in these areas. We write today in strong support of President Obama's nomination of Mr. Michael Botticelli, the current Acting Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), to be the permanent Director of ONDCP. Mr. Botticelli has proven himself to be a highly effective and dynamic administrator. We strongly urge the Committee to swiftly confirm Mr. Botticelli's nomination.

Substance use disorders (SUD) are a leading cause of death (over 100,000 deaths annually). One in four deaths is attributable to alcohol and other drugs. Three quarters of the over 7 million people in the criminal justice system have a substance use disorder and/or had alcohol or drugs in their systems at the time of arrest. Barely 10% of the 23 million Americans who suffer from SUD receive any specialty care even though SUD are chronic diseases that can be effectively prevented and treated, and tens of millions of people are living in recovery from addiction.

In the face of these serious challenges facing our country, Mr. Botticelli's background, expertise and ability to lead make him the ideal choice for Director of ONDCP. Mr. Botticelli's breadth of experience leading various public health agencies at the state and federal levels makes him uniquely qualified to shape our national drug control policy. We commend Mr. Botticelli's work thus far as Acting Director, and applaud his ability to engage with individuals and organizations representing the broad spectrum of stakeholders in our national drug policy. Mr. Botticelli has served as a strong, unifying leader in responding to the ongoing opioid crisis, highlighting the need for a coordinated, comprehensive response. He has also been a tireless advocate for the rights of individuals seeking addiction treatment to receive insurance coverage for their treatment that is at parity with the coverage for other kinds of health care. Mr. Botticelli has worked effectively with the wide range of stakeholders, from addiction prevention and treatment providers, to people in recovery and their family members, to members of the law enforcement, court and corrections communities, essential to implementing a smarter, more effective drug policy.

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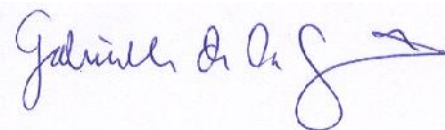
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Throughout his career, Mr. Botticelli has promoted policies that work and helped to identify and eliminate those that do not, always remaining passionate in his determination to address drug use and addiction and dispassionate in his analysis of the evidence. LAC strongly endorses the nomination of Mr. Michael Botticelli to be Director of ONDCP and encourages his swift confirmation.

Sincerely,



Paul Samuels, JD
Director/President
Legal Action Center



Gabrielle de la Gueronniere, JD
Co-Director of Policy
Legal Action Center