

March 26, 2019

The Honorable James E. Risch  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Menendez,

On behalf of the 19 undersigned national Jewish organizations and institutions, we write to express our strong opposition to the re-nomination of Ronald Mortensen as assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. We urge you to reject his nomination.

As Jews, we understand the reality of fleeing violence and oppression as immigrants and refugees. We believe that the United States is a nation of immigrants and how we treat the stranger reflects on the moral values and ideals of this nation, as well as our specific Jewish values.

Mortensen is currently a fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies ("CIS"), an extreme anti-immigrant group founded in 1985 with the help of John Tanton, a racist and architect of the modern anti-immigrant movement with a history of promoting "passive" eugenics. CIS publishes reports and articles, including by Mortensen, promoting the idea that immigration has a detrimental impact on American society. CIS also has disturbing ties to racists, circulating articles penned by white nationalists.

Mortensen's role at CIS should alone be disqualifying, but he also has a long and disturbing track record of hostile and hateful anti-immigrant rhetoric. He has criticized Dreamers and accused undocumented immigrants of "destroying the lives of American men, women, and children." He has criticized efforts at reforming the country's immigration system, and perpetuated the harmful stereotype and myth that immigrants are linked with higher crime rates.

Mortensen is simply unsuited to head a bureau whose charge it is to provide protection to refugees and those around the world escaping persecution. The Jewish community knows all too well what happens when people fleeing for their lives feel like they have nowhere to turn. America must remain a beacon of hope and freedom for those escaping violence and persecution. If Mortensen were confirmed we believe this core ideal would be severely undermined.

Sincerely,

Ameinu  
American Jewish World Service  
Anti-Defamation League  
Avodah  
Aytzim: Ecological Judaism  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action

Habonim Dror North America  
J Street  
Jewish Community Action  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish Women International  
Jewish World Watch  
Keshet  
National Council of Jewish Women  
New Israel Fund  
Reconstructing Judaism  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
Right Now: Advocates for Asylum Seekers in Israel  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights