

June 18, 2018

The Honorable Bob Corker
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 Corker and Ranking Member Menendez,

On behalf of the 16 undersigned national Jewish organizations and institutions, we write to express our strong opposition to the 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
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Habonim Dror North America
J Street
Jewish Community Action
Jewish Labor Committee
Jewish Women International
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