



July 15, 2021

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chair
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I would like to express our strong support and endorsement for President Biden's nomination of Rahul Gupta, M.D., MPH, M.B.A, FACP to lead the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), a critically important position for coordinating the nation's drug policy and response to the country's drug addiction and overdose crisis. Dr. Gupta is a well-respected internist and member of the College whose public health experience will serve the country well in this role. It is vitally important to report Dr. Gupta's nomination to the full Senate as quickly possible so that he can fully engage in responding to the ongoing public health emergency caused by opioid and drug abuse and those who are struggling with substance use disorder. The social isolation and economic hardships brought on by COVID-19 have only exacerbated drug overdose cases.

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 163,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Internal medicine specialists treat many of the patients at greatest risk from COVID-19, including the elderly and patients with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

As a global thought leader of innovative health care policies, Dr. Gupta brings a wealth of experience to the position. Currently, he is the Senior Vice President and Chief Medical and Health Officer for the March of Dimes. In that capacity, he provides strategic oversight for the March of Dimes medical efforts to promote the health of mothers and their infants. He has launched several innovative health initiatives, including the Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Birthscore Program to identify high-risk infants. He has championed efforts to encourage women to reduce smoking during pregnancy.

Previously, Dr. Gupta served two terms as Health Commissioner for the State of West Virginia under both a Democratic and Republican Governor. As the Chief Health Officer, he led West Virginia's efforts in responding to and combatting their opioid crises. He is widely known for his data-driven work that has been held as a national model and is being replicated by several states and communities across the nation. In addition, he created a model for the equitable distribution of naloxone and instituted a statewide medication-assisted treatment system and syringe service program.

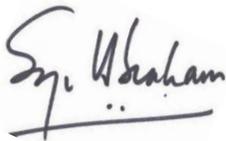
Prior to serving as Health Commissioner, Dr. Gupta led the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department. While living in the state, he was elected President of the West Virginia State Medical Association (2016-17) by his colleagues who had full confidence he could advance policies to treat the addiction epidemic as a mental health disorder. During his presidency, Dr. Gupta worked with allied health professionals to advance team collaboration models.

Dr. Gupta is a specialist in internal and preventative medicine. He has served previously as an academic faculty member at universities in Alabama and Tennessee. He has lived and practiced in small towns in rural Alabama and large cities such as Chicago.

As a physician-scientist, Dr. Gupta has published over 125 peer reviewed manuscripts and received the "2018 Public Official of the Year" award by Governing magazine. He received the 2017 Civil Rights Award by the West Virginia Human Rights Commission for outstanding contributions in the areas of civil and human rights. He helped establish the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs. Dr. Gupta was named "West Virginian of the Year" in 2017 by Charleston Gazette-Mail, the state's largest Pulitzer winning newspaper.

Therefore, ACP strongly encourages the Judiciary Committee to swiftly report to the full Senate the appointment of Dr. Gupta to the position of Director of ONDCP. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George M. Abraham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

George M. Abraham, MD, MPH, FACP, FIDSA
President