

# United States Senate

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July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The Honorable William Barr  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C., 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr:

I write yet again to request an update from the Department of Justice regarding the status of the implementation of the Ashanti Alert Act. I am disheartened that over seven months after being signed into law, I have been unable to get appropriate answers from the Department on the status of implementation, including a briefing from the person who was supposed to be designated as the national coordinator.

Thus, I am requesting an in-person meeting this month with key individuals responsible to discuss next steps of the implementation process. At this meeting I would hope to get a detailed timeline of the Department's plans on the full implementation of the Ashanti Alert communications network.

President Trump signed into law the Ashanti Alert Act of 2018 (Pub L. 115-401) on December 31, 2018. This law is critical to our nation's efforts in saving the lives of missing adults. Given the urgency of improving public safety, I am especially frustrated at the Department of Justice's slow pace of implementation of the law. In April 2018, Virginia passed its own legislation to create an Ashanti Alert network and the first alert was issued in July 2018 – three months after it was signed into law by Governor Northam. While I understand that creating a nationwide alert system is a challenging undertaking, the current lack of progress is concerning and unacceptable. Virginia has led the way in fully implementing this critical alert system in a short period of time and now it is the federal government's turn to act quickly and efficiently in order to start saving lives on a national level.

The law requires the Attorney General to appoint a national coordinator for Ashanti Alerts. Called the Ashanti Alert Coordinator, he or she plays a pivotal role in the success of the alert network. Among other responsibilities, the Coordinator will work with state authorities and federal agencies, including the Federal Communications Commission, on how to implement the program into existing alert systems and what protocols to use. However, according to conversations with staff from the Department of Justice, there is currently not an Ashanti Alert Coordinator appointed. Can you confirm whether you have designated a national coordinator to lead the implementation effort? If not, can you explain what has been causing the delay?

I am eager to receive an update from either the appointed Ashanti Alert Coordinator or senior officials at the Department of Justice who are overseeing the implementation efforts. Please respond with a plan and a meeting date for no later than August 2nd, 2019. If your staff have further questions or there is more I can do to help move implementation forward, please contact Elizabeth Falcone in my office at [elizabeth\\_falcone@warner.senate.gov](mailto:elizabeth_falcone@warner.senate.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark R. Warner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator