Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2015

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
Room HT-2, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey:

As you begin to write the fiscal year 2016 State, Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, we write to support funding to protect the fundamental human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people around the globe.

As you have demonstrated through your leadership, it is both a moral and strategic imperative that our nation continues to protect and expand human rights for all people, wherever they live. As President Obama said in his State of the Union address this January, we defend human rights "not only because they're right, but because they make us safe." He followed that by including a number of programs and initiatives in his FY2016 budget for the State Department and USAID that would focus on protecting the human rights of LGBT people around the world.

Unfortunately, progress toward full equality for all people has stagnated, or even reversed, in a number of places, and LGBT people face dangerous and harsh conditions in many countries around the world:

- Same-sex conduct is criminalized in 76 countries;
- In 10 countries same-sex conduct is punishable by death;
- So-called anti-LGBT "propaganda" laws inhibit LGBT advocacy in three countries; and
- In 2014 there were over 200 documented reports of transgender people murdered in 28 countries. There continues to be countless undocumented cases of violence against transgender people throughout the world.

We therefore strongly urge you to fully fund the president's requests for programs that would help to strengthen civil society, rule of law and democracy in places where the rights of LGBT people have been increasingly under fire. The Obama Administration has included LGBT rights as an important pillar of the United States' foreign policy, including by creating the position of Senior LGBT Coordinator at USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and

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Governance (DRG Center), as well as by appointing the first Special Envoy for the Rights of LGBT Persons at the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. It is vital that the programs and positions that are responsible for protecting LGBT rights receive robust funding that enables them to carry out their missions.

As you know, a society that does not protect the rights of its most vulnerable citizens cannot fully develop sustainable, prosperous, and democratic societies; therefore, economic growth must be accompanies by advances in human rights. The United States has a history of standing up for the world's vulnerable populations, and we must continue to do so now. As incredible progress towards equality is made in our own country, we must remember the plight of the millions of LGBT people around the world who lack basic rights and freedoms.

We look forward to working with you as we continue to protect the human rights of all people, regardless of whom they are or whom they love.

Sincerely,

David N. Cicilline

Eliot L. Engel

Raúl M. Grijalva

Theodore E. Deutch

William R. Keating

Alcee L. Hastings

Gwen Moore

Elizabeth H. Esty

Jared Polis

Alan Lowenthal

Matt Cartwright

Barbara Lee

Alan Grayson

Steve Cohen

Adam B. Schiff

Al Green

Dan Kildee

Sander M. Levin

Keith Ellison

Hank Johnson

Eleanor Holms Norton

Diana DeGette

Charles B. Rangel

Carolyn B. Maloney

Karen Bass

Gerald E. Connolly

Jerrold Nadler

Donald S. Beyer

Janice D. Schakowsky

Susan A. Davis

Mark DeSaulnier

Sean Patrick Maloney

Lucille Roybal-Allard

Paul Tonko

Brian Higgins

Nydia M. Velázquez

Lois Capps

Chellie Pingree

Mark Takano

Jim McDermott

Stephen F. Lynch

Kyrsten Sinema

Frederica Wilson

Scott H. Peters

Jackie Speier

Mark Pocan