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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

CO-CHAIR, DEMOCRATIC POLICY AND
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
REGULATORY REFORM, COMMERCIAL
AND ANTITRUST LAW

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EUROPE, EURASIA, AND EMERGING THREATS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA

March 16, 2018

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

As you begin to write the Fiscal Year 2019 State, Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, we write to support funding to protect fundamental human rights of all people.

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 you know, marginalized and minority communities face unique challenges and are often the subjects of extreme discrimination, harassment, even violence or death. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities worldwide face particular difficulties, as simply being LGBTI is still criminalized in 72 countries, sometimes punishable by death. Recognizing the extreme dangers faced by many LGBTI individuals around the world, the State Department, USAID, and their partners have implemented programs that respond to violence and discrimination targeting LGBTI individuals and communities worldwide. These programs are embedded within broader initiatives supporting minority inclusion as a cornerstone of democracy, human rights and economic development.

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

Same-sex conduct is criminalized in 72 countries;

In up to 10 countries same-sex conduct may be punishable by death;

In 2017 there were almost 325 documented reports of transgender people murdered in 33 countries. There continue to be countless undocumented cases of violence against transgender people throughout the world.

Gay men and transgender individuals remain disproportionately affected by HIV, and are estimated at anywhere from 19 to 49 times more at risk than the general populations, largely because of dispositioned burdens of stigma, discrimination and violence against LGBTI people because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

This last year has been especially difficult for LGBTI people around the globe. Nearly one year ago, shocking reports of torture and killings targeting gay men and women in Chechnya began to emerge, and captured the world's attention, rightly receiving bipartisan condemnation in Congress. Beginning in February 2017, more than 100 people perceived to be gay or bisexual were rounded up by militia and government forces in Chechnya and tortured in secret detention centers. More recently, Egypt initiated a horrific crackdown on LGBTI people, arresting dozens after a rainbow flag was flown at a concert in Cairo. There are also reports that members of the Egyptian parliament want to consider legislation to further criminalize LGBTI people. And it has been recently reported that the Indonesian parliament is considering legislation criminalizing same-sex relations.

Against the backdrop of increasing discrimination against and criminalization of LGBTI communities, it is more important than ever that the United States continue its practice of strong support for programs that strengthen civil society, rule of law and democracy in places where the rights of LGBTI people have been under fire.

We therefore strongly urge you to continue to fund programs that strengthen civil society, rule of law and democracy in places where the rights of LGBTI people have been under fire, and to fund programs devoted to the protection of LGBTI rights. Specifically this includes funding for:

- The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) at the State Department, including for the Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons;
- The Governing Justly and Democratically budget at USAID;
- PEPFAR funding to combat and prevent HIV/AIDS among key populations;
- USAID Operating Expenses including the Human Rights Division LGBTI Portfolio; and
- General funding for the Democracy Fund.

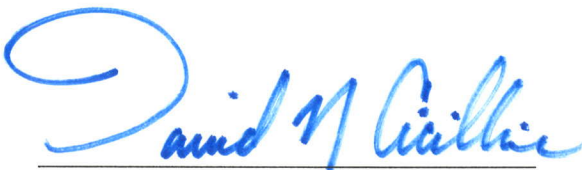
Additionally, we ask that you include language in the FY19 Committee Report similar to language included in the FY18 Senate State and Foreign Operations Committee Report, which directed the Department of State to include LGBTI discrimination in its annual country human rights reports and to consider such discrimination in assistance decisions. It also urged State and USAID to continue allocating funding for the Global Equality Fund and the LGBTI Portfolio within USAID's Human Rights Division.

This language will ensure that the State Department's annual Human Rights Reports include information about discrimination against LGBTI people, reinforcing our country's commitment to including LGBTI people in the fight for equal rights.

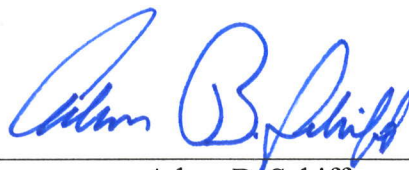
As you know, a society that does not protect the rights of its most vulnerable citizens cannot fully develop sustainable, prosperous, and democratic societies; therefore, economic growth must be accompanied by advances in human rights. The United States has a history of standing up for the world's vulnerable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

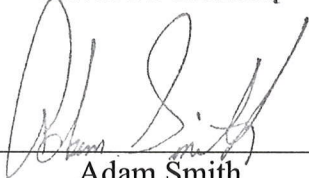
Sincerely,



David N. Cicilline



Adam B. Schiff



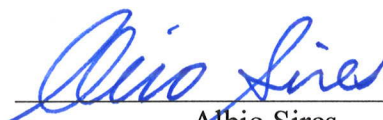
Adam Smith



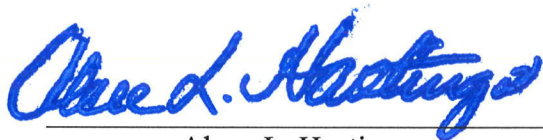
Adriano Espaillat



Alan Lowenthal



Albio Sires



Alcee L. Hastings



Barbara Lee



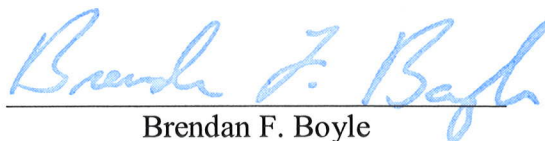
Bill Foster



Bobby L. Rush



Bradley S. Schneider



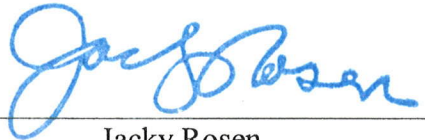
Brendan F. Boyle



Charlie Crist



Joseph P. Kennedy, III



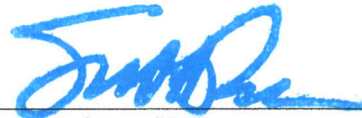
Jacky Rosen



Niki Tsongas



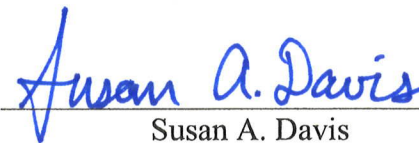
Zoe Lofgren



Scott H. Peters



Cheri Bustos




Susan A. Davis



Bonnie Watson Coleman



Carol Shea-Porter



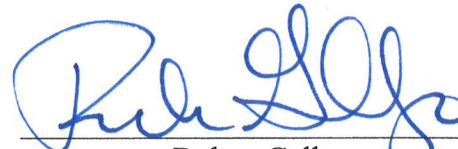
Norma J. Torres



Thomas R. Suozzi



Doris Matsui



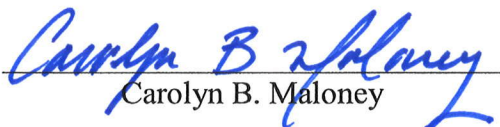
Ruben Gallego



A. Donald McEachin



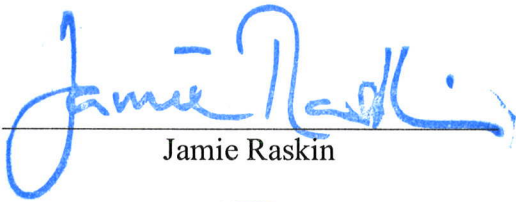
Brenda L. Lawrence



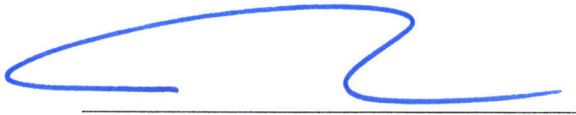
Carolyn B. Maloney



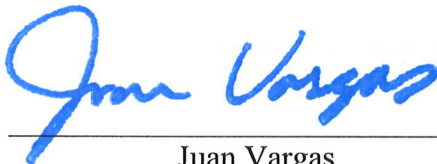
Ann McLane Kuster



Jamie Raskin



John K. Delaney



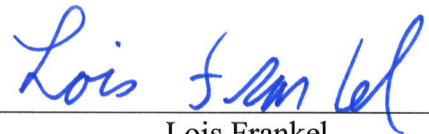
Juan Vargas



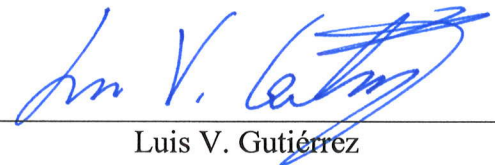
Kathleen M. Rice



Keith Ellison



Lois Frankel



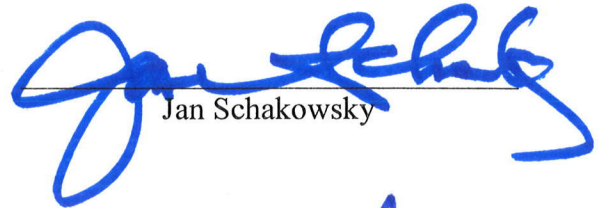
Luis V. Gutiérrez



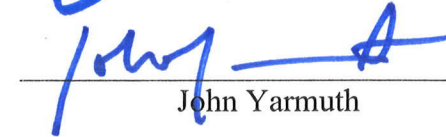
Mark DeSaulnier



Michael E. Capuano



Jan Schakowsky



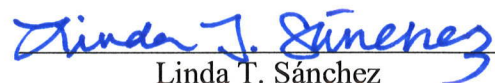
John Yarmuth



Karen Bass



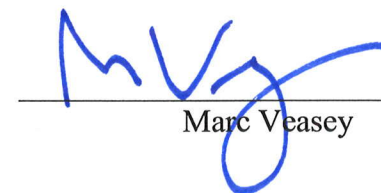
Kathy Castor



Linda T. Sánchez



Lucille Roybal-Allard



Marc Veasey



Mark Takano

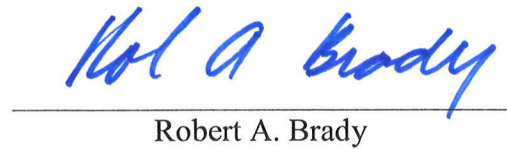


Nanette Diaz Barragán

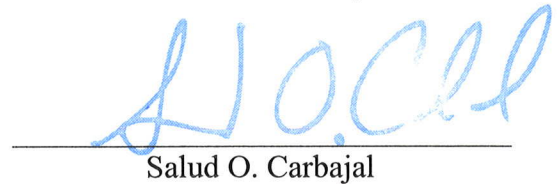

Raja Krishnamoorthi


Raúl M. Grijalva

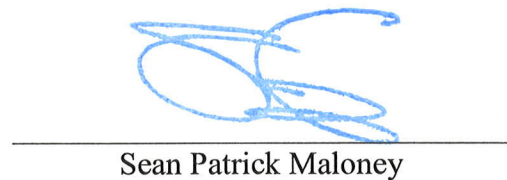

Ro Khanna

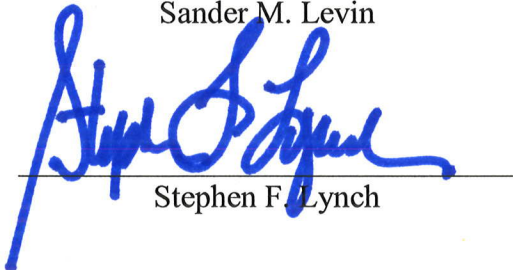

Robert A. Brady


Ruben J. Kihuen



Salud O. Carbajal


Sander M. Levin

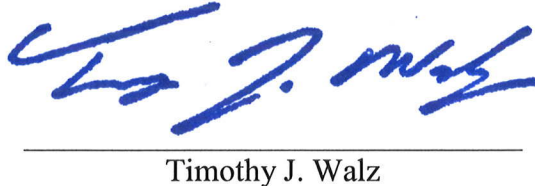

Sean Patrick Maloney

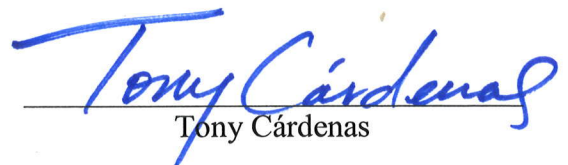

Stephen F. Lynch

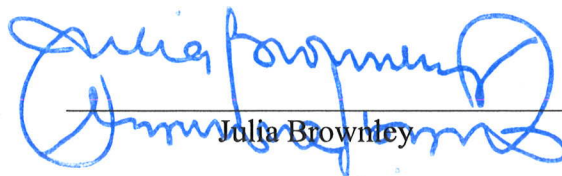

Steve Cohen


Ted Deutch


Ted W. Lieu


Timothy J. Walz

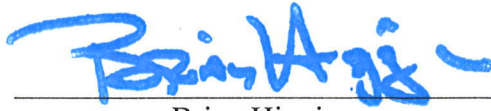

Tony Cárdenas


Julia Brownley


Jimmy Gomez


Jerrold Nadler


Dwight Evans



Brian Higgins



Chellie Pingree



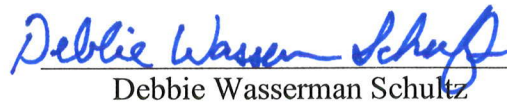
Daniel T. Kildee



Danny K. Davis



Debbie Dingell



Debbie Wasserman Schultz



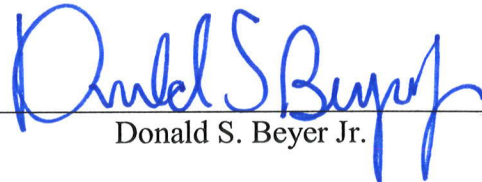
Diana DeGette



Dina Titus




Donald M. Payne, Jr.



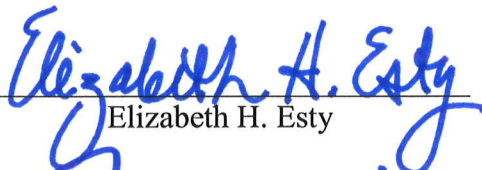
Donald S. Beyer Jr.



Eleanor Holmes Norton



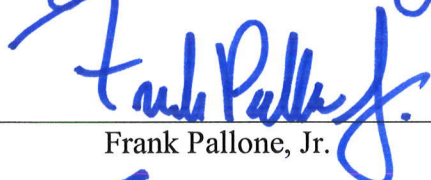
Eliot L. Engel



Elizabeth H. Esty



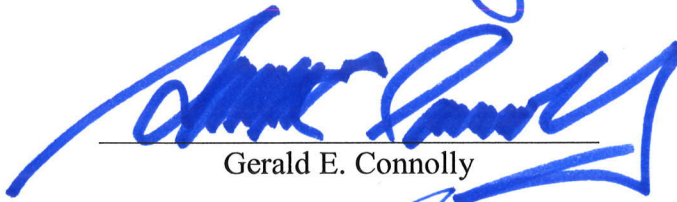
Filemon Vela



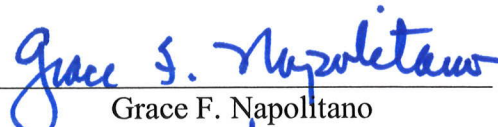
Frank Pallone, Jr.



Frederica S. Wilson



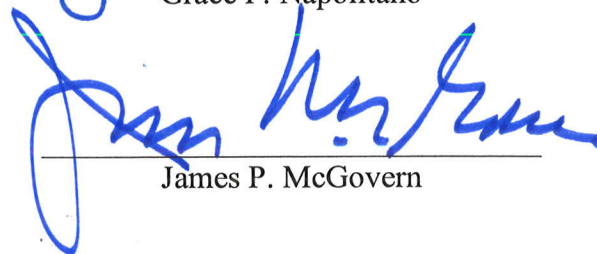
Gerald E. Connolly



Grace F. Napolitano



Jackie Speier



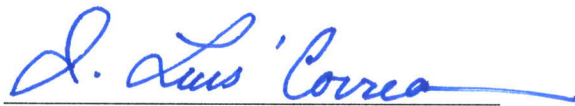
James P. McGovern




Eric Swalwell



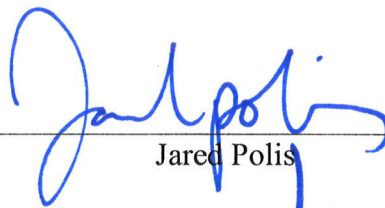
Darren Soto



J. Luis Correa



Alma S. Adams



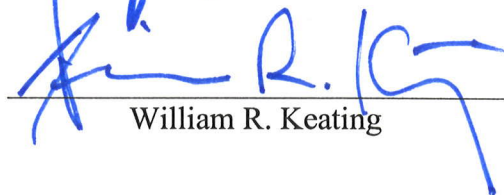
Jared Polis



Colleen Hanabusa



Jimmy Panetta



William R. Keating