

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 24, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Gayle Smith
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Kerry and Administrator Smith:

We applaud the ongoing work of the Department of State and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to advance the human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) persons around the world, and write today to encourage continued support for and the institutionalization of programs that address the global challenges of the LGBT community.

In 2011, President Obama addressed the United Nations General Assembly and stated that “no country should deny people their rights because of who they love, which is why we must stand up for the rights of gays and lesbians everywhere.” Soon thereafter, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum, entitled “International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons,” to address the global challenges of the LGBT community.

In the following years, we saw the creation of the Senior LGBT Coordinator at USAID and the Office of the Special Envoy for Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Persons at the Department of State. Our commitment to promoting the human rights of the LGBT community is clear, and we must ensure it continues.

In light of the ongoing discrimination and violence faced by LGBT people around the world, their struggle for equality and justice abroad remains significant. There are still many countries in which homosexuality is illegal, LGBT persons are persecuted, and public support for the LGBT community is prohibited. Over 75 countries have anti-LGBT laws. There were nearly 300 reported cases of transgender people murdered in 29 different countries last year, with countless unreported cases around the globe. The LGBT community in Indonesia has seen an increase in

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harassment and abuse, including by government officials. Recently, two gay rights activists were brutally murdered in Bangladesh.

In 2014, 53 members of Congress signed letters requesting robust funding for the Office of the Senior LGBT Coordinator at USAID to support efforts to further protect the human rights of LGBT persons. We continue to support robust funding for USAID's LGBT portfolio, including the budget, staff, and resources necessary to institutionalize its ability to advance the human rights of LGBT persons around the world. Specifically, we support the creation of permanent positions at USAID to ensure continuity in leadership of this important portfolio into the future.

We also strongly urge full support for institutionalizing the Department of State Office of the Special Envoy. This will be critical to its ability to carry out its mission in the years ahead — affirming and strengthening the U.S. commitment to LGBT equality as a permanent and critical component of our international human rights policy.

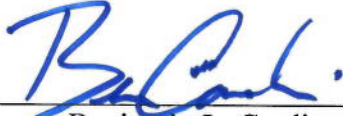
It is a moral and strategic imperative for the United States to continue to protect and expand human rights for all people, regardless of who they are and whom they love. The Department of State and USAID, as representatives of the United States government worldwide, are in a unique and influential position to advance the basic human rights of all people. We express our sincerest gratitude for the historic steps that you have already taken to advance LGBT rights. We urge you to take the necessary steps at the Department of State and USAID to institutionalize, integrate, and make permanent the United States' commitment to advancing the rights of LGBT persons around the world.


Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

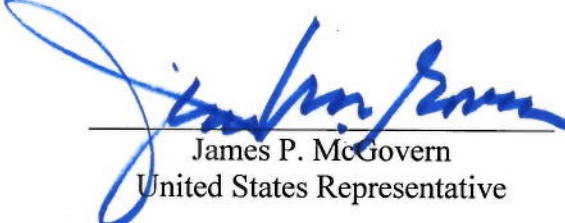

David N. Cicilline
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Sean Patrick Maloney
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United States Representative



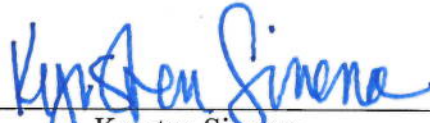
Kirsten Gillibrand
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Mark Takano
United States Representative



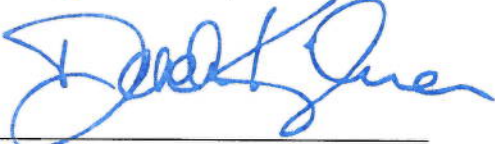
Al Franken
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Kyrsten Sinema
United States Representative



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



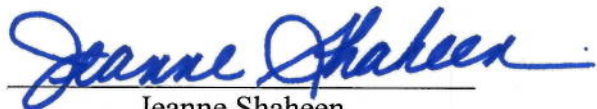
Derek Kilmer
United States Representative



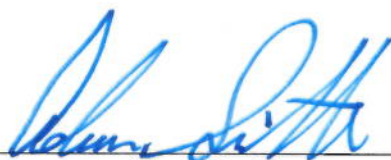
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Adam Smith
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Barbara Boxer
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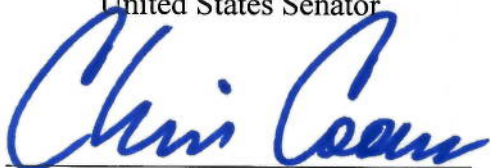
Dan Kildee
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Richard Blumenthal
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Jerrold Nadler
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Christopher A. Coons
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Mark DeSaulnier
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Elizabeth Warren
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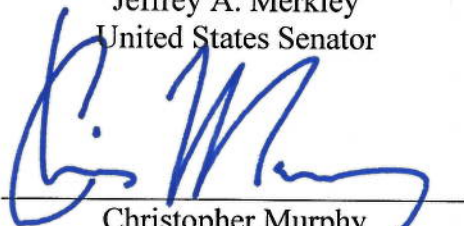
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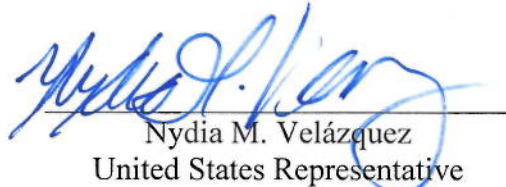
Michael M. Honda
United States Representative



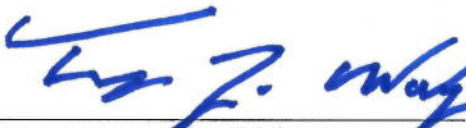
Katherine Clark
United States Representative



Kathy Castor
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Tim Walz
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Ann McLane Kuster
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Zoe Lofgren
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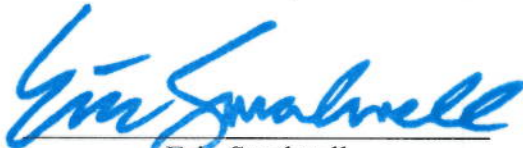
Mike Quigley
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Brendan F. Boyle
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Eric Swalwell
United States Representative



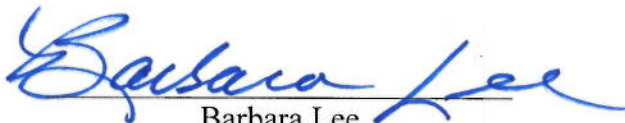
Bobby Rush
United States Representative



Chris Van Hollen
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Ted Deutch
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Barbara Lee
United States Representative



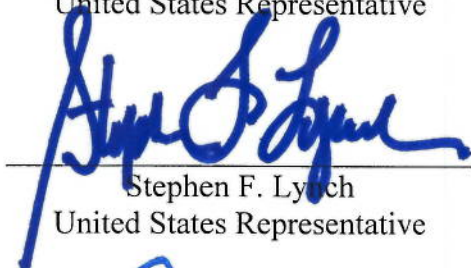
Grace Meng
United States Representative



Debbie Dingell
United States Representative



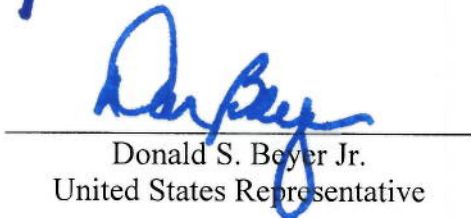
Sam Farr
United States Representative



Stephen F. Lynch
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Norma J. Torres
United States Representative



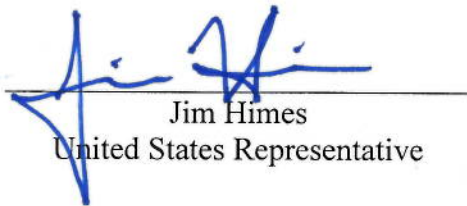
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
United States Representative



Joe Courtney
United States Representative



Scott H. Peters
United States Representative



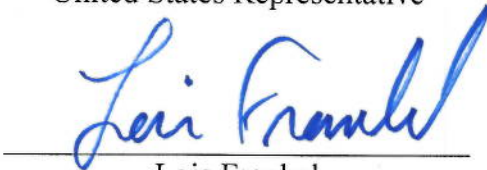
Jim Himes
United States Representative



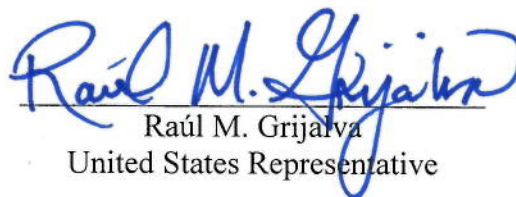
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
United States Representative



Ted W. Lieu
United States Representative



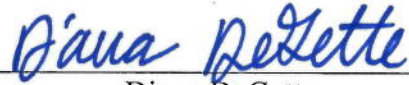
Lois Frankel
United States Representative



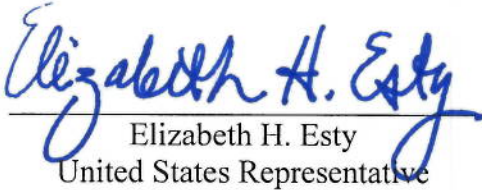
Raúl M. Grijalva
United States Representative



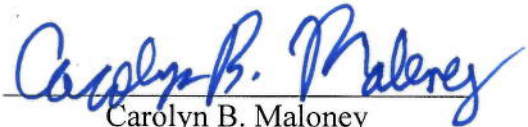
Earl Blumenauer
United States Representative



Diana DeGette
United States Representative



Elizabeth H. Esty
United States Representative



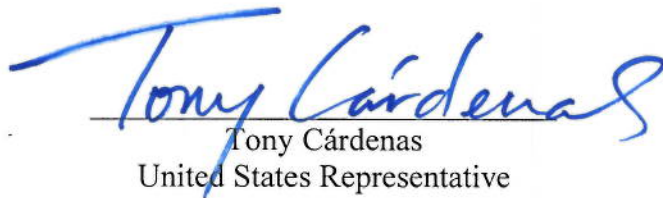
Carolyn B. Maloney
United States Representative



Niki Tsongas
United States Representative



Luis V. Gutiérrez
United States Representative



Tony Cárdenas
United States Representative



Frederica S. Wilson
United States Representative

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Deputy Administrator
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