

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 5, 2024

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries,

We write to highlight the urgent funding shortfall facing the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) that poses a significant and immediate risk to vulnerable young children and pregnant and postpartum women. We urge you to ensure any final appropriations package fully funds the WIC program for fiscal year 2024 (FY24) in order to avert disastrous participation or benefit cuts.

WIC is a vital lifeline for millions of vulnerable American families. It provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, health care referrals, and other important services to nearly 7 million low-income pregnant and postpartum participants, infants, and young children nationwide.<sup>1</sup> For more than 25 years, there has been a bipartisan commitment to provide adequate funding for WIC to serve every eligible family that relies on the program and to ensure that those in need are not turned away. At the foundation of this commitment is substantial evidence of WIC's positive impacts on the health and development of its participants.

Higher-than-expected program participation and rising food costs mean WIC funding levels proposed in both the House and Senate annual appropriations bills fall far short of what is needed for FY24. In recognition of the urgency of this shortfall, the Biden Administration has requested Congress provide \$1.4 billion in emergency funding for WIC.<sup>2</sup> If Congress fails to act and continues WIC's current funding level for the rest of the fiscal year, approximately 2 million pregnant and postpartum women and young children would be turned away from the program by September 2024— an inexcusable outcome.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/09/01/wic-cuts-congress-budget-shutdown/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/about-2-million-parents-and-young-children-could-be-turned-away-from-wic>

If Congress fails to fully fund WIC, states will soon be forced to start turning eligible families away. Eligible applicants and current participants, primarily postpartum women who are not breastfeeding and children, could be put on waiting lists— leaving them without the services they rely on indefinitely. There are more than half a million current WIC participants who are pregnant and will need to renew their benefits shortly after giving birth.<sup>4</sup> Under a funding shortfall, some of these new mothers could see their benefits halted. These new moms would lose access to WIC’s nutritious foods at a time that is critical for their health and their child’s development. Such devastating outcomes would disproportionately impact people of color, who are already at higher risk for severe pregnancy-related health issues including maternal mortality.

But even if states can, to some degree, avoid waiting lists, many participants would still be harmed by a shortfall. States are expected to reduce outreach, limit clinic hours, and leave staff vacancies unfilled to reduce spending, which are measures that impact *all* potentially eligible people. Additionally, once word gets out that states cannot serve certain applicants, people who are more medically at-risk and would be prioritized for participation<sup>5</sup> may mistakenly believe that they would be denied benefits and decide not to apply. We also know that any cuts to specific WIC services, particularly the evidence-based fruit and vegetable incentives program, would undermine the program’s effectiveness. We urge you to reject any proposal that eliminates or cuts fruit and vegetable vouchers, or any other WIC service.

America’s maternal health crisis is growing worse by the day, and further disruption to WIC in the coming months would be catastrophic. As you work to finalize a government funding package, we urge you to fully fund WIC and protect vulnerable women and children from losing access to the vital support that WIC provides. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Lauren Underwood  
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/looming-wic-funding-shortfall-would-jeopardize-access-to-wics-proven-benefits-and>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-eligibility-priority-system>



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Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress



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Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



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Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress



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Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



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Susie Lee  
Member of Congress



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Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



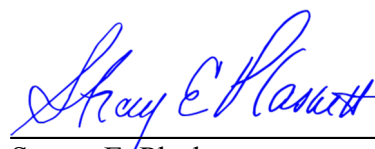
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



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Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress



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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress



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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



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Troy A. Carter, Sr.  
Member of Congress



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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress



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Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



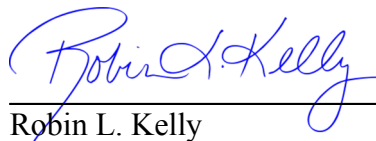
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Val Hoyle  
Member of Congress



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JM Tokuda  
Member of Congress



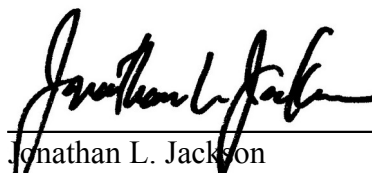
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Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



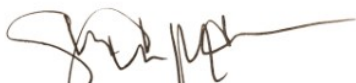
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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



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Jonathan L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



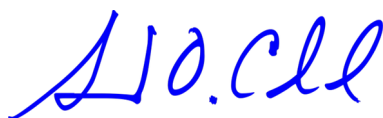
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Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress



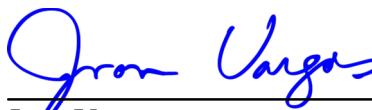
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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



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Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



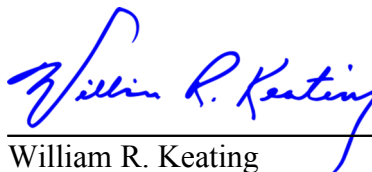
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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



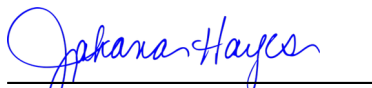
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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



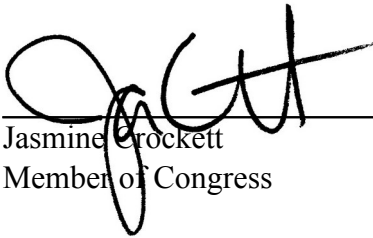
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Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress



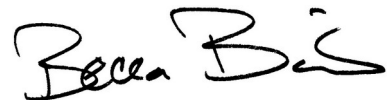
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Elissa Slotkin  
Member of Congress



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Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



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Becca Balint  
Member of Congress



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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



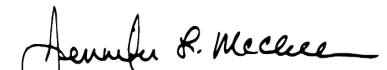
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



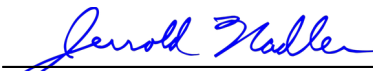
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Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



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Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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André Carson  
Member of Congress



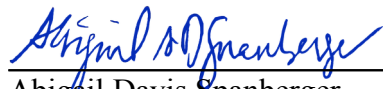
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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



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Abigail Davis Spanberger  
Member of Congress



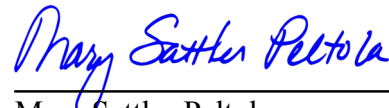
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J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



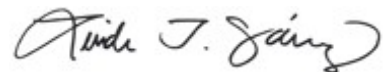
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Mary Sattler Peltola  
Member of Congress



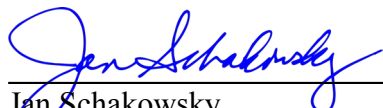
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Patrick K. Ryan  
Member of Congress




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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



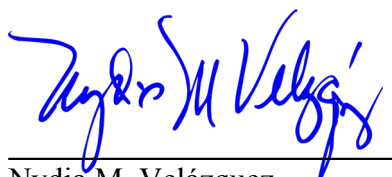
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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



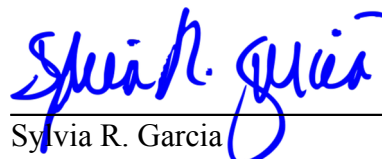
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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



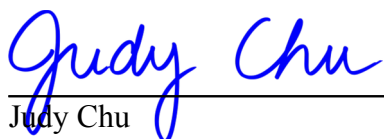
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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



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Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



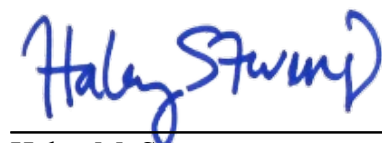
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



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Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress



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Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



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Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress



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Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



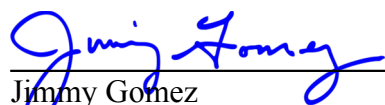
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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress





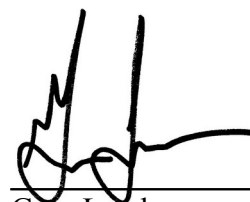
Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress



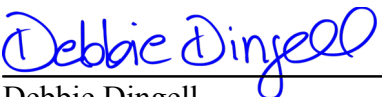
Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Greg Landsman  
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



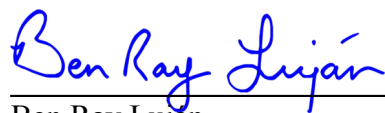
Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



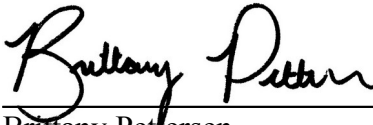
Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress



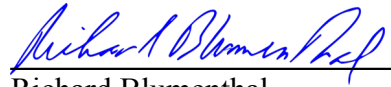
Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress



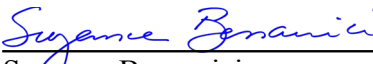
Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator



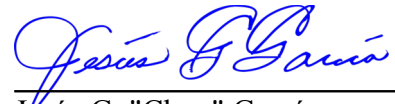
Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Andy Kim  
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost  
Member of Congress



Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



Colin Z. Allred  
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



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Katie Porter  
Member of Congress



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Mike Levin  
Member of Congress



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John Fetterman  
United States Senator



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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



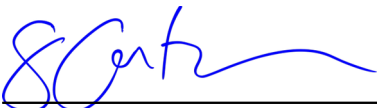
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Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress



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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



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Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



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Yadira Caraveo, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



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Angie Craig  
Member of Congress



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Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress



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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

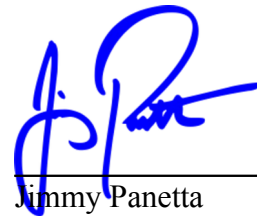


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Summer Lee  
Member of Congress

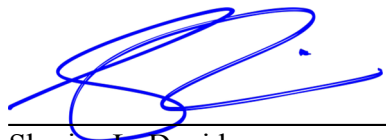
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Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress



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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



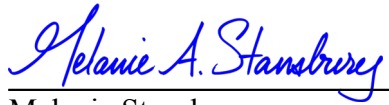
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Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress



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Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



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Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



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Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress



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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



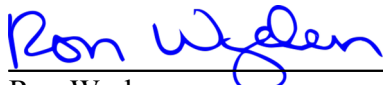
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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



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Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress



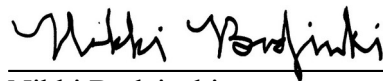
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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress



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Nikki Budzinski  
Member of Congress



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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



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Jack Reed  
United States Senator



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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



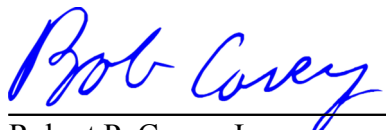
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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



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Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress



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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



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Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress



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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



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Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress



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Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



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Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress



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Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



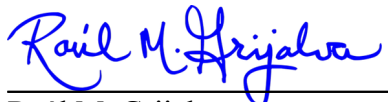
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Bradley Scott Schneider  
Member of Congress



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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



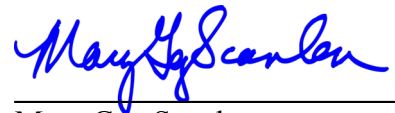
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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



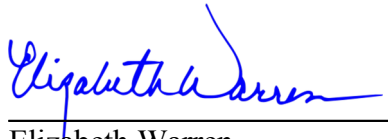
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Eric Sorensen  
Member of Congress



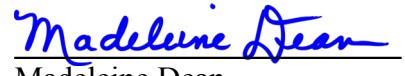
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Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



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Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress



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Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



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Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



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Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



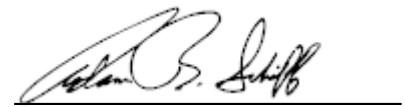
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Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



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Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress





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Valerie P. Foushee  
Member of Congress



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



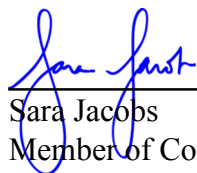
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Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress



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Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



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Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



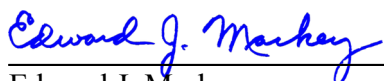
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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



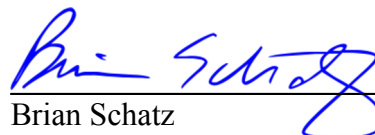
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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



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Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



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Jared Moskowitz  
Member of Congress



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



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Al Green  
Member of Congress  
Scion of the Enslaved  
Africans -  
Sacrificed to Make America  
Great



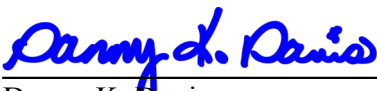
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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



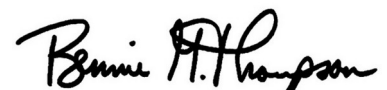
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Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress



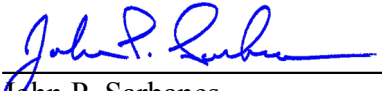
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



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John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress



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Gregorio Kilili Camacho  
Sablan  
Member of Congress



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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



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Emilia Strong Sykes  
Member of Congress



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Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger, Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations