

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2026

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health, and Human Services  
and Related Agencies  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health, and Human Services  
and Related Agencies  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you consider Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations legislation, we urge you to include the following essential investments in affordable and accessible early education, early intervention, and quality child care:

**Provide at least \$12.4 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) for FY 2027, an increase of at least an additional \$3.57 billion.** CCDBG provides federal funding to states for child care subsidies for families with low-incomes with children under age 13, but current funding levels limit access, only allowing 14 percent of eligible children to participate in the program nationwide.<sup>1</sup> When investments are made in the program, such as the bipartisan funding increase for CCDBG in FY 2018, which doubled funding for the program, there is a positive effect. Federal CCDBG funding helps families access affordable, quality child care across a variety of settings, while also strengthening and expanding the supply the of child care.

Despite the bipartisan support to expand CCDBG, significant gaps remain in the federal programs to support access to affordable child care and early learning. Improving access to high-quality, affordable child care is a pressing economic priority for our country. Child care challenges for parents and caregivers in the workforce cost the economy an estimated \$172 billion each year, where families lose \$134 billion in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue, while productivity problems associated with child care challenges cost employers \$38 billion annually.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the overall costs, limited child care access also undermines our workforce. One in four parents of children under three have been fired from or quit a job because of challenges securing child care, and 41 percent have turned down a new job offer for this reason.<sup>3</sup> The ongoing challenges affecting child care access are limiting economic growth, threatening employers and small businesses, and hurting working families. Child care is a pressing economic priority for our country. Funding freezes and other funding interruptions delay these important resources from reaching families, children, and providers.

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<sup>1</sup> Hardy, Alycia, Schmit, Stephanie, and Wilensky, Rachel, *Child Care Assistance Landscape: Inequities in Federal and State Eligibility and Access*, The Center for Law and Social Policy (June 24, 2024), <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/inequitable-access-2024/>; First Five Years Fund, 2025 Child Care and Early Learning State Fact Sheets (2025), <https://www.ffyf.org/2025-state-fact-sheets/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ready Nation, *The Child Care Crisis Costs the U.S. Economy \$172 Billion Each Year*, Institute for Child Success (Feb. 11, 2026), <https://www.instituteforchildsucces.org/resources/resource/cost-child-care-crisis-report/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

By delivering on the bipartisan goal<sup>4</sup> of funding CCDBG at \$12.4 billion, we can continue to increase the number of eligible children and families able to access child care subsidies and help expand the supply of child care by increasing the number of providers who can participate in the program. This will help lower the cost of care for working families, enable economic growth, and expand the number of children who can access the care that supports positive physical and brain development. Specifically, increased investment would result in the following:

- **Helping more families access and afford child care:** The demand for child care from working families is clear, but the lack of supply is preventing parents and guardians across the nation from accessing the care they need. The limited supply of care also directly contributes to the unreachable cost of child care. Paying for child care is one of the highest costs in a family’s annual budget. The Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor finds through its National Database of Childcare Prices the median annual costs of care for one child, depending on provider, ranged from \$6,552 to \$15,600 in 2022.<sup>5</sup> Based on this data, the National Database of Childcare Prices shows that some middle-class families are spending as much as 16 percent of their annual income on care. This cost is not sustainable for any family. A significant increase in CCDBG funding will expand the program’s reach, reduce costs for families, and increase the ability to provide quality care to more eligible children who are not currently receiving subsidies.
- **Increasing payments and wages for providers to expand the supply of child care:** Although prior increases in CCDBG funding have helped some states increase at least some of their payment rates for providers serving families receiving child care assistance, provider payments remain alarmingly low, and more work is desperately needed. By better supporting child care providers and early childhood educators, we can increase the supply of child care providers and ultimately provide families with more options for care. Many providers are being paid poverty-level wages with little to no access to other workplace benefits like healthcare. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics at the Department of Labor, child care workers only earn a median wage of \$15.41 per hour and it is among one of the lowest paid sectors.<sup>6</sup> The inadequate wages paid to caregivers also drives staffing shortages: the turnover in child care workers is approximately 65 percent higher than in a typical job.<sup>7</sup> According to recent workforce survey data, 65 percent of child care program directors and administrators reported compensation was too low to recruit or retain enough staff.<sup>8</sup> These low wages are especially harmful to women, particularly women of color, who are disproportionately represented in the early care and

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from Congresswoman Katherine M. Clark and 132 colleagues, to House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (April 27, 2022), <https://katherineclark.house.gov/press-releases?ID=FFAA8165-20B8-4DAA-969B-7B9A9E4E6AA0>; Letter from Senator Richard Burr and 4 colleagues, to Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (May 23, 2022), [https://www.collins.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ccdbg\\_letter.pdf](https://www.collins.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ccdbg_letter.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Women’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, National database of Childcare Prices, at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/featured-childcare>

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Childcare Workers, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/childcare-workers.htm> (visited January 27, 2026).

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.clevelandfed.org/publications/cd-reports/2024/20240119-childcare-and-education-workforce>

<sup>8</sup> The ORG who shared this with me said the data is coming out soon.

education workforce.<sup>9</sup> By committing to greater investment in CCDBG, states are further incentivized to make changes that improve the quality of child care for all children and acknowledge child care providers as essential to our economic well-being.

- **Enabling women to fully participate in the workforce:** Many parents need to make job changes because of challenges related to child care; however, having steady and reliable child care options allows parents to improve their economic stability by participating more robustly in the workforce.<sup>10</sup> Studies have found that increases in CCDBG subsidies have the potential to substantially increase workforce participation and employment rates for mothers with low incomes in the United States.<sup>11</sup> In fact, a recent report by the United States Census Bureau found that child care subsidies help working mothers stay in the labor force and narrow the pay gap between spouses.<sup>12</sup> The child care crisis is an economic issue that disproportionately affects women, and studies show that women have been nearly three times as likely as men to not work outside the home over the past few years because of child care demands.<sup>13</sup> By strengthening CCDBG, we can expand the workforce and better support working women.
- **Improving outcomes for children:** Children’s brains develop rapidly from the ages of birth to 5, and quality child care can support children’s healthy development. Research from the U.S. shows that high-quality early learning programs provide children with foundational skills for reading, vocabulary, math, self-control, and social-emotional development.<sup>14</sup> Further, these benefits are most prominent in children from families with low incomes. By strengthening investments in CCDBG, more children can experience the cognitive, social, and behavioral benefits from attending high-quality child care programs.

**Provide \$932 Million for IDEA Grants for Infants and Toddlers and \$503 million for IDEA Preschool Grants.** We also urge you to provide increased funds for the two critical early childhood programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Together,

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<sup>9</sup> Austin, Lea J.E., Edwards, Bethany, and Whitebook, Marcy, *Racial Wage Gaps in Early Education Employment*, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley, <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/brief/racial-wage-gaps-in-early-education-employment/>; Banerjee, Asha, Gould, Elise, and Sawo, Marokey, Setting higher wages for child care and home health care workers is long overdue, Economic Policy Institute (Nov. 2021), <https://www.epi.org/publication/higher-wages-for-child-care-and-home-health-care-workers/>.

<sup>10</sup> Maag, Elaine, Lou, Cary, Casas, Michelle, Daly, Hannah, Garriga, Gabriella, and Hunter, Lillian, *The Return on Investing in Children*, Urban Institute (Sept. 2023), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/The%20Return%20on%20Investing%20in%20Children.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Enchautegui, María et. al, *Effects of the CCDF Subsidy Program on the Employment Outcomes of Low Income Mothers*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (December 2016), <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/253961/EffectsCCSubsidiesMaternalLFPTechnical.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Gurrentz, Benjamin, *Child Care Subsidies Help Married Moms Continue Working, Bring Greater Pay Equity*, U.S. Census Bureau (Oct. 12, 2021), <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/10/measuring-impact-of-child-care-subsidies-on-working-moms.html>; Araujo, Valeska, McBride, Linden, and Sandler, Danielle H., *The Impact of Childcare Costs of Mothers’ Labor Force Participation*, Center for Economic Studies (April 2025), <https://www2.census.gov/library/working-papers/2025/adrm/ces/CES-WP-25-25.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Schoch, Annie D., Gerson, Cassie S., Halle, Tamara, and Bredeson, Meg, *Children’s Learning and Development Benefits from High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Summary of the Evidence*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (Aug. 2023), <https://acf.gov/opre/report/childrens-learning-and-development-benefits-high-quality-early-care-and-education>.

IDEA Grants for Infants and Toddlers (Part C of IDEA) and IDEA Preschool Grants (Part B, Section 619 of IDEA) deliver comprehensive services for children with disabilities from birth through 5 years of age and their families. These programs serve more than one million children per year and benefit all states.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, federal investments in both programs have failed to match increases in the number of children served as well as the cost of inflation. Consequently, both programs have experienced a significant erosion of funding over the last two decades.

High-quality early interventions in early care and education can produce a 13 percent per child, per year return on investment.<sup>16</sup> This substantial return on investment is derived largely from long-term savings associated with a reduced need for special education, improved health outcomes, higher rates of high school and college graduation, decreased dependence on welfare programs, and increased workforce productivity of children who receive a high-quality early education.

Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have consistently demonstrated our commitment to expanding access to affordable, quality child care. The child care stabilization relief funds<sup>17</sup> and historic increases to annual CCDBG funding provided much-needed lifelines to families, children, and the child care industry. We urge you to again, in a bipartisan matter, expand these critical federal resources for affordable, high-quality child care and early childhood education.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress




Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *43rd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2021* (Jan. 2022), <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/43rd-arc-for-idea.pdf>.


<sup>16</sup> Heckman, James, *Economist James J. Heckman: Early Education Packs a High Return on Investment*, Committee for Economic Development (March 6, 2017), <https://www.ced.org/blog/entry/comprehensive-birth-to-age-five-early-childhood-education-has-the-highest-r>.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *COVID Investments in Child Care: Supporting Children, Families, and Providers*, June 1, 2023, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/infographic/covid-investments-child-care-supporting-children-families-and-providers>.




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John B. Larson  
Member of Congress




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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



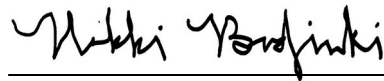
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



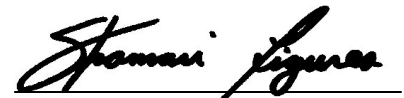
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Lateefah Simon  
Member of Congress




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Nikki Budzinski  
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Member of Congress




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Sharice L. Davids  
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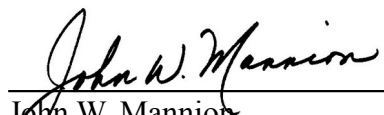
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Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress




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Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



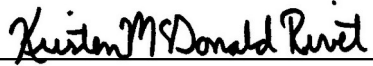
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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
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Kristen McDonald Rivet  
Member of Congress



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Derek T. Tran  
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Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



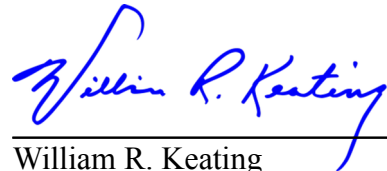
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Nellie Pou  
Member of Congress



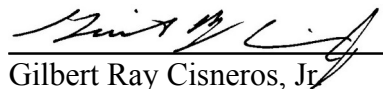
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Jared Golden  
Member of Congress



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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



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Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress



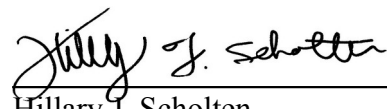
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Adelita S. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



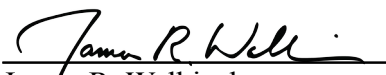
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Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress



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Hillary J. Scholten  
Member of Congress



James R. Walkinshaw  
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



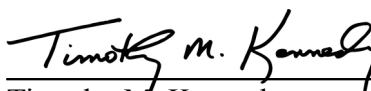
Maxwell Alejandro Frost  
Member of Congress



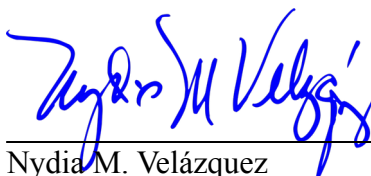
Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



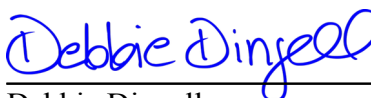
Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



Timothy M. Kennedy  
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



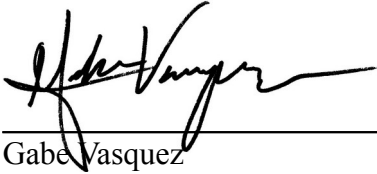
Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress



Herbert C. Conaway, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez  
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



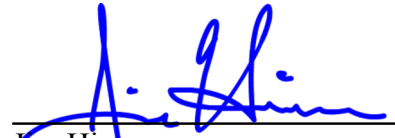
Dan Goldman  
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Angie Craig  
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



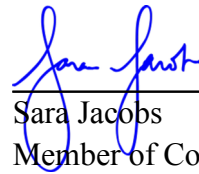
Jim Himes  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



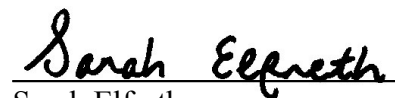
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle  
Member of Congress

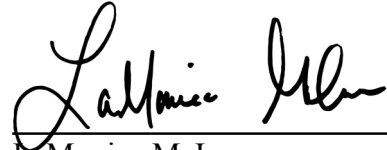


Sarah Elfreth  
Member of Congress



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Becca Balint  
Member of Congress



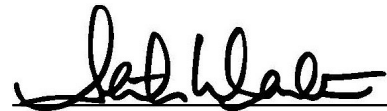
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LaMonica McIver  
Member of Congress



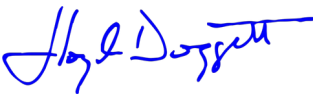
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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SETH MOULTON  
Member of Congress



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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



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Andre Carson  
Member of Congress



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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



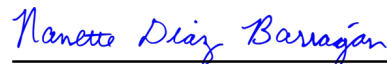
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Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



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Brian K. Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



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Nanette Diaz Barragan  
Member of Congress



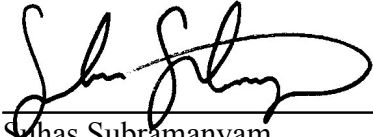
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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



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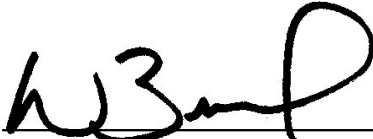
Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam  
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



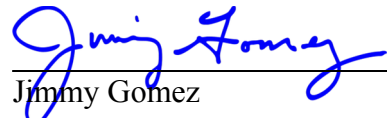
Wesley Bell  
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David Scott  
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress



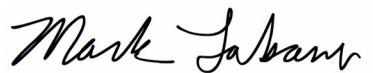
Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman  
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress



Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



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



Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



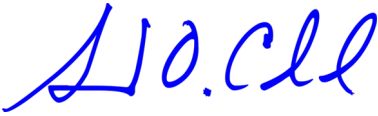
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Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress



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Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



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Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



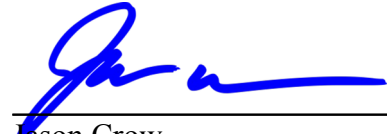
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



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Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



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George Whitesides  
Member of Congress



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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



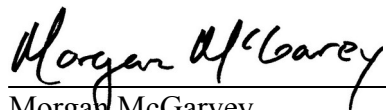
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Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Eric Sorensen  
Member of Congress



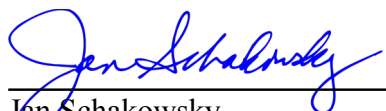
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Morgan McGarvey  
Member of Congress



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Bradley Scott Schneider  
Member of Congress



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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



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Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress



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Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress



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George Latimer  
Member of Congress



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Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



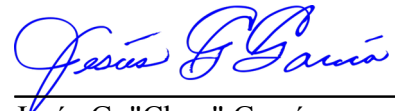
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Gabe Amo  
Member of Congress



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress




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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



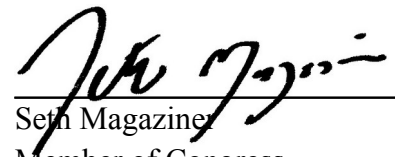
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Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



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Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress



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Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



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April McClain Delaney  
Member of Congress



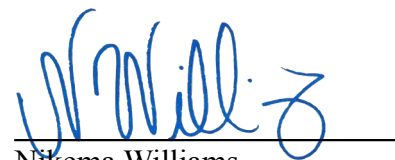
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Maxine Dexter  
Member of Congress



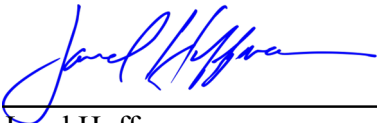
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Robert J. Menendez  
Member of Congress



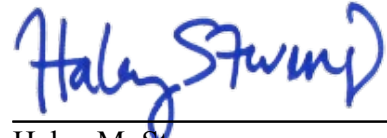
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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress



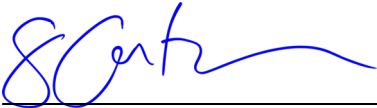
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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



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Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



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Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



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Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



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Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress



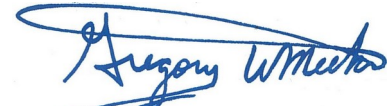
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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



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Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



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Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



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Yassamin Ansari  
Member of Congress



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Al Green  
Member of Congress



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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



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Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



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Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress



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Ami Bera  
Member of Congress



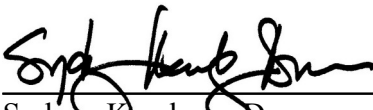
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Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



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Troy A. Carter, Sr.  
Member of Congress



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Kelly Morrison  
Member of Congress



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Maggie Goodlander  
Member of Congress



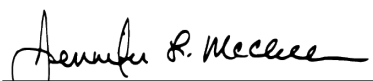
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Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress



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Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress



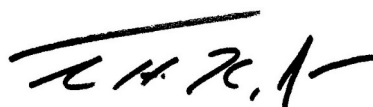
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Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



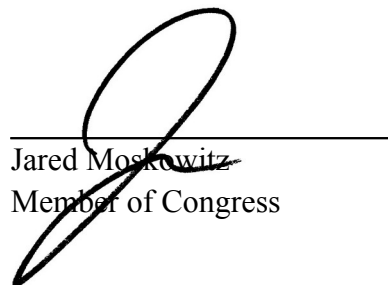
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Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress



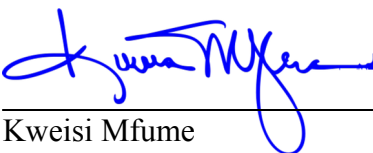
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Thomas H. Kean, Jr.  
Member of Congress



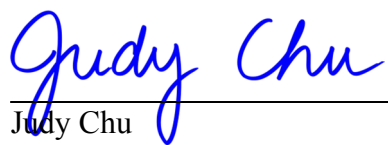
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Jared Moskowitz  
Member of Congress



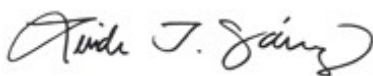
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Kweisi Mfume  
Member of Congress



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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



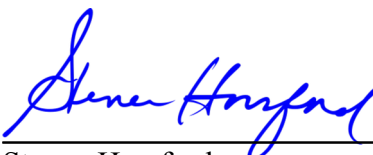
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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



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Emilia Strong Sykes  
Member of Congress



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Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress



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Luz M. Rivas  
Member of Congress



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Donald G. Davis  
Member of Congress



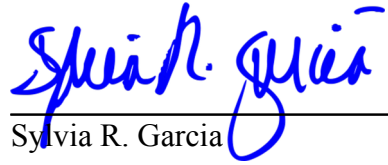
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Sarah McBride  
Member of Congress



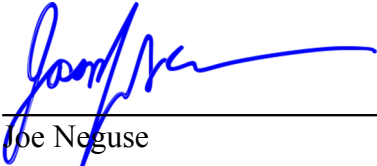
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Teresa Leger Fernández  
Member of Congress



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Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress