

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2016

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Service, Education
and Related Agencies
2413 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger, Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
HT-2, the Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable John Carter
Chair
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Granger and Ranking Member Lowey,
and Chair Carter and Ranking Member Roybal-Allard:

As you consider funding for Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17), we write to urge you to include robust funding for key accounts affecting refugees and other vulnerable populations. The Administration has proposed to resettle 100,000 eligible refugees by the end of FY17. Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Committee ensure we can meet the needs of these vulnerable communities by allocating \$2.95 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services' Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account, \$3.604 billion for the Department of State's Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account, \$100 million for the Department of State's Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account, \$2.8 billion for the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account, and explore options for enhancing funding for the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education:

Refugee Assistance Appropriations Letter

The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account in the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) appropriations bill funds the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which helps states and local communities welcome and support refugees and other vulnerable populations on their path to self-sufficiency. In addition to refugees, ORR also serves increasing numbers of unaccompanied children, asylees, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients, Cuban and Haitian entrants, victims of human trafficking, and victims of torture. We request that Congress allocate \$2.95 billion for the agency to adequately serve all of the populations within its mandate and respond to unanticipated needs.

State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs:

The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account funds the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). This account provides overseas assistance to displaced refugees, supporting refugee admissions, and funding lifesaving services in humanitarian emergencies. The crises in Syria and Iraq continue to escalate dramatically, and there are likewise serious humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Burma, and Central American countries. Therefore, we request \$3.604 billion, which will be critical to ensure that PRM can continue to service currently displaced populations while responding to numerous emerging humanitarian crises.

Escalating violence and instability in many parts of the world have placed increasing demands on the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account—an emergency draw-down account that provides an important “safety valve” during emergencies. The ERMA authorized level has not been increased since the mid-1990s. We request the Committee fund this account at \$100 million in order to enhance our country's ability to respond quickly to unanticipated crises, and expeditious, draw-down authority provided to the Secretary of State.

The International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account funds humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. Meeting the needs of internally displaced persons is one way to prevent the need for them to flee their countries of origin and become refugees. In order to meet these needs, we request that the Committee allocates \$2.8 billion in order to meet the needs of growing numbers of persons worldwide who are displaced within their own countries, including those inside Syria and Iraq.

Homeland Security:


The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) plays an important role in processing applications for refugees, asylees, and other humanitarian programs. Currently, USCIS is fee-funded by applicants for non-immigrant visas and other immigration applications. Thus, USCIS faces the challenge of increased backlogs and delays in the processing of refugee and asylum applications. We urge appropriators to work with USCIS to identify whether additional funds could enhance USCIS's ability to ensure timely processing of refugee and asylum applications, including the carrying out of security screening

Refugee Assistance Appropriations Letter


The United States remains deeply committed to safeguarding the American public from terrorists, just as we are committed to providing refuge to some of the world's most vulnerable people. These goals are not mutually exclusive, and can be pursued in harmony. Our first priority is the safety of the American people. That's why, even as the United States accepts more refugees—including Syrians—we do so only after subjecting them to the most rigorous screening and security vetting of any category of traveler to the United States.


We deeply appreciate your support for these services and your consideration of these requests, as we seek to provide this critical funding to serve and protect some of the world's most vulnerable people and maintain our legacy as a global humanitarian leader.


Sincerely,



Rep. Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress


Rep. John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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



Rep. Filemon Vela
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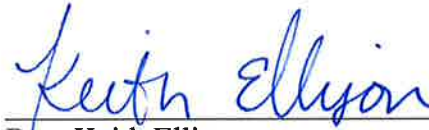
Rep. Jim McDermott
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Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton
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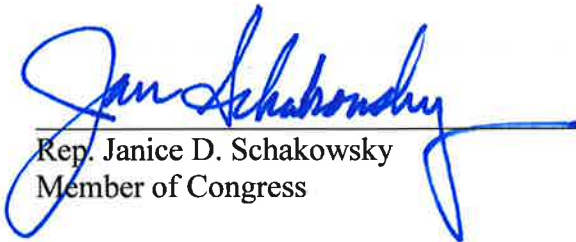
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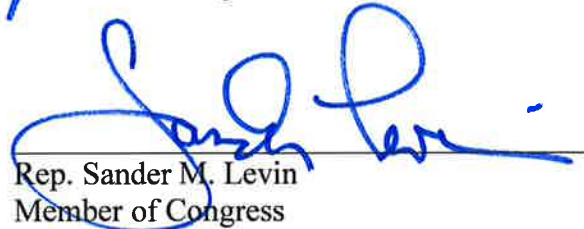
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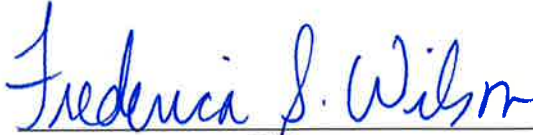
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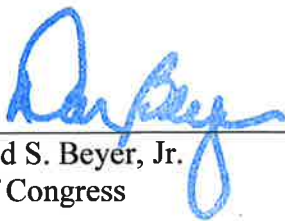
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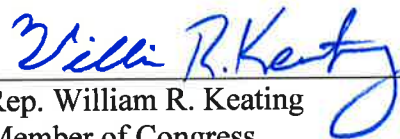
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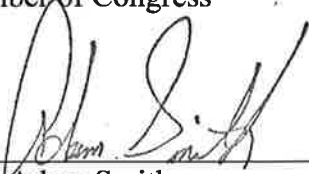
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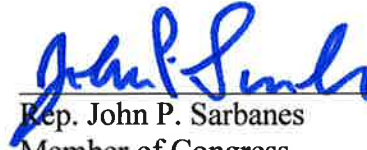
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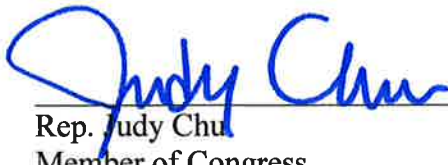
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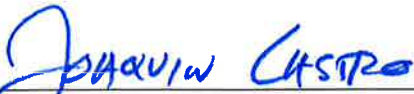
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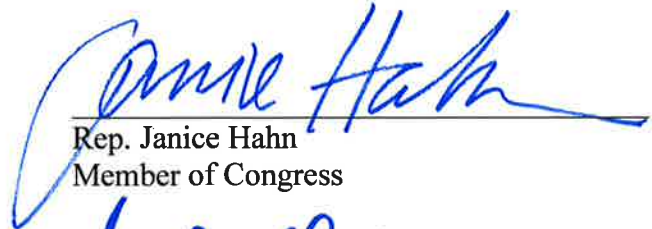
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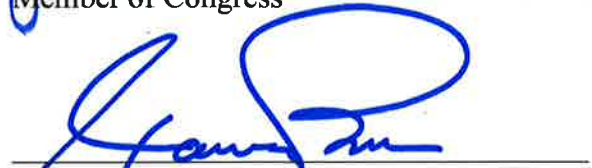
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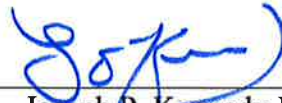
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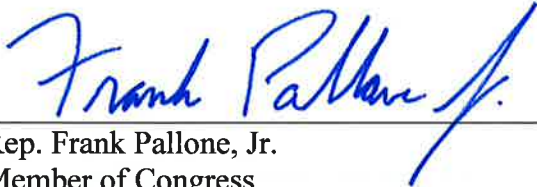
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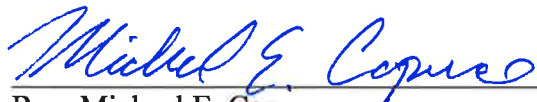
Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.
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Rep. Ami Bera, M.D.
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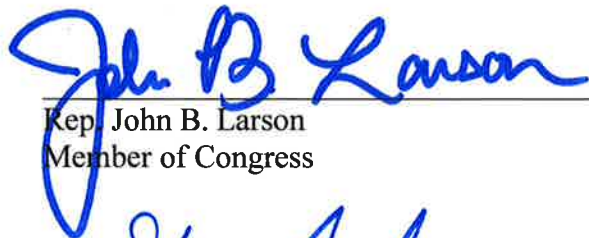
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Rep. John B. Larson
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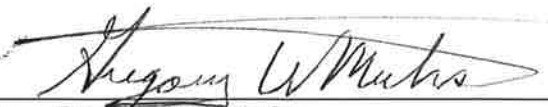


Rep. Elijah E. Cummings
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Rep. Steve Cohen
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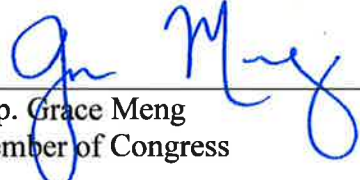

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Rep. Katherine M. Clark
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Rep. Karen Bass
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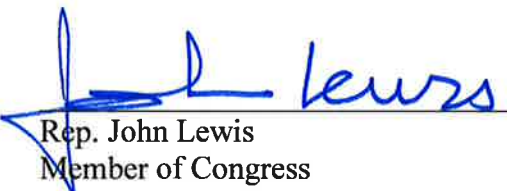

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Rep. Chaka Fattah
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Rep. Tulsi Gabbard
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Rep. Timothy J. Walz
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Rep. Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

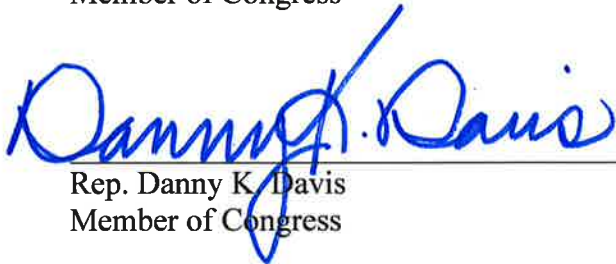
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Rep. Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



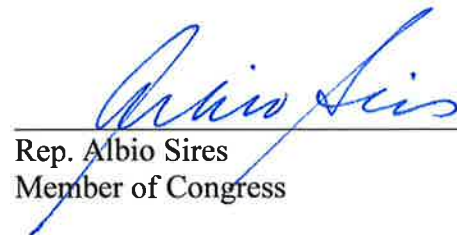
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Rep. Tammy Duckworth
Member of Congress



Rep. Jim Costa
Member of Congress



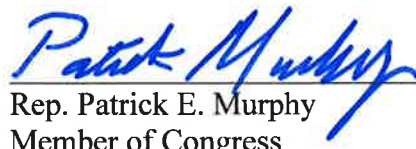
Rep. Albio Sires
Member of Congress



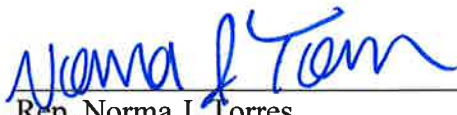
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Member of Congress



Rep. Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress



Rep. Patrick E. Murphy
Member of Congress



Rep. Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress

Refugee Assistance Appropriations Letter

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Stacey E. Plaskett", written over a horizontal line.

Rep. Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress