

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 21, 2025

The Honorable Denise Carter  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dr. Matthew Soldner  
Acting Director  
Institute of Education Sciences  
550 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Acting Secretary Carter and Acting Director Soldner:

We write to raise serious objections to Elon Musk’s “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE)’s work at the Department of Education (“the Department”), which appears to have resulted in recent orders to terminate ongoing federal education research, evaluation, statistics, and technical assistance efforts at the Institute of Education Sciences (“IES”)<sup>12</sup>. These actions, together with the illegal firing of the Education Inspector General<sup>3</sup>, dismissal of an unknown number of staff at the Department<sup>4</sup>, and sidelining of an undisclosed number of staff placed on paid, administrative leave, unable to do any work,<sup>5</sup> raise significant concern about what appears to be a series of steps intended to achieve the illegal elimination of the Department that will undermine the ability of the Department to effectively administer and oversee federal education programs and funds, exposing them to increased risk for waste, fraud, and abuse<sup>6</sup>.

Further, the lack of transparency of all of these actions flies in the face of Elon Musk’s statements during his February 11<sup>th</sup> press appearance in the Oval Office in which he said: “All of our actions are maximally transparent. In fact, I don't think there's been, I don't know of a case where an organization has been more transparent than the DOGE organization.”<sup>7</sup> While DOGE claimed 89 contract terminations,<sup>8</sup> a Department spokesperson identified 90, and other reports indicated 169 terminations<sup>9</sup>. The Department and IES must provide more transparency on how taxpayer resources are being used consistent with the law.

The lack of information about and apparent disregard for careful planning and consideration<sup>10</sup> for sweeping terminations of contracts and firing of staff is alarming. The consequences of these actions will prevent the public from accessing accurate information about student demographics and academic achievement, abruptly end evaluations of Federal programs that ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely, and set back efforts to implement evidence-based reforms to improve student outcomes.

Congress created IES under the bipartisan *Education Science Reform Act* (ESRA) in 2002 as a semi-independent agency “to provide national leadership in expanding fundamental knowledge and understanding in education” in order to provide parents, educators, students, researchers, policymakers, and the general public with reliable research and information about the condition and progress of education in the United States,

<sup>1</sup> <https://x.com/DOGE/status/1889113011282907434>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2025/02/11/elon-musk-and-doge-cancel-education-department-research-contracts/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/12/us/politics/inspectors-general-trump-lawsuit.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/12/education-department-fire-civil-servants-00203980>

<sup>5</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/some-department-education-staff-put-on-leave-after-trump-dei-order/story?id=118398190>

<sup>6</sup> [https://oig.ed.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-02/FY25%2520Management%2520Challenges%2520Facing%2520the%2520U.%2520S.%2520Department%2520of%2520Education%2520%252811.18.24%2529v100\\_508\\_SECURED.pdf](https://oig.ed.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-02/FY25%2520Management%2520Challenges%2520Facing%2520the%2520U.%2520S.%2520Department%2520of%2520Education%2520%252811.18.24%2529v100_508_SECURED.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/elon-musk-faces-1st-questions-doges-transparency-joins/story?id=118705771>

<sup>8</sup> <https://x.com/DOGE/status/1889113011282907434>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2025/02/11/elon-musk-and-doge-cancel-education-department-research-contracts/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/12/trump-doge-education-elon-musk-cuts.html>

including special education. The law establishes four centers—the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), and National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE)—to support grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements that produce rigorous education research, collect accurate statistics about our nation’s education system, conduct high-quality evaluations of education programs, and support educators, education system leaders, and policymakers in implementing evidence-based practices. The ESRA also authorized Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), a network of 10 laboratories that work in partnership with State educational agencies, school districts, and other entities to use data and research to improve students’ academic outcomes. Additionally, Equity Assistance Centers (EACs) provide technical assistance to states, districts, school boards, and schools at their request to assist in the desegregation of schools pursuant to Title IV of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*.

We understand that as of 5:00 PM on Monday, February 10, 2025, IES sent stop-work orders to entities carrying out at least 90 contracts, halting ongoing NCEE-funded evaluations, and NCES statistics data collection and analysis. IES already spent millions of dollars to carry out portions of these contracts, and now due to DOGE’s abrupt actions, the American people will not receive the full benefits of these investments. Specifically, many studies were well underway, and in canceling them, IES provided no option for future studies to build off the investments to date. At 9:00 PM the same day, IES canceled NCER and NCSER peer review panels that evaluate grant applications for scientific merit. We also understand that on Thursday, February 13, 2025, the Department canceled more than \$350 million in contracts and grants to RELs and EACs. These short-sighted and wasteful decisions will have harmful consequences for our nation’s students who will not reap the benefits of the terminated activities.

- **Canceling evaluations of federal programs:** NCEE’s evaluation work is a crucial component of the Department’s compliance with the *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018*. The Trump Administration’s decision to cancel ongoing NCEE evaluations will bury important information about the efficacy of the following programs:
  - Teacher residency programs to address teacher shortages.
  - Career and technical education.
  - Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program to improve evidence-based comprehensive literacy instruction.
  - School-based mental health services.
  - English learner outcomes.
  - Transition supports for youth with disabilities under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.
  - The only federally funded private school voucher program, the DC Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) program.
  - State flexibility under the Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority in Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*.
- **Canceling RELs contracts and EACs grants:** These contracts and grants were terminated halfway through their five-year project periods, depriving local communities of the support they’ve requested to help address challenges in their communities. This includes the one example of “wasteful and ideologically driven spending” cited by the Department<sup>11</sup>, which was assistance requested by Akron Public Schools to help them implement equity initiatives aligned to state and local plans.<sup>121314</sup> With regard to the RELs, the Department indicated that it would “enter into new contracts that will satisfy the

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-cancels-additional-350-million-woke-spending>

statutory requirements, improve student learning, and better serve school districts, State Departments of Education, and other education stakeholders.” No such statement was made in reference to the EACs. The term “equity” appears in law, and the intention that every child receives a quality education is a central theme that Congress built into the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA, as well as in previous reauthorizations. Here too, IES has already spent millions of dollars to carry out portions of these contracts and grants—funding that directly assists states, school districts, and localities—and now DOGE intends to reverse course, thereby wasting the time, effort, and taxpayer dollars that have been expended for and in our communities.

- **Canceling national statistics studies:** The Trump Administration’s decision to cancel most ongoing NCES statistical work will greatly deprive our country of accurate data on students, schools, educators, colleges, universities, and the challenges they face:
  - National Postsecondary Student Aid Study
  - Early Childhood Longitudinal Study
  - School Survey on Crime and Safety
  - High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study
  - Early Childhood Longitudinal Study
  - National Teacher and Principal Survey
  - National Training and Education Workforce Survey
  
- **Undermining the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):** The Trump Administration has slashed contracts that analyze NAEP data and canceled the contract that disseminates NAEP findings to the public. Additionally, the Trump Administration canceled the contracts that manage EdFacts and the Common Core of Data (CCD), the Department’s comprehensive statistical database of all public schools and school districts. The CCD is critical for developing accurate nationally representative samples of schools. Without this data, it may be impossible for IES to carry out NAEP in a reliable manner in the coming years.
  
- **Pulling the U.S. from participating in international assessments:** The Trump Administration has decided to cancel contracts that enable the United States to participate in international assessments that compare American student performance with that of other students from around the world, specifically canceling the contract that enables the United States to participate in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Programme for International Student Assessment.
  
- **Canceling the contract that analyzes data to identify rural school districts:** DOGE has also canceled the contract that analyzes NCES data to determine schools’ geographic locale classifications, school geocodes, and school district boundaries. This data is critical for identifying rural school districts and carrying out the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) and Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) programs authorized under the ESEA.
  
- **Canceling peer review panels for future grants:** Congress appropriated \$309 million to IES in fiscal year 2024 to support rigorous research in areas of great importance to our nation, including literacy and

<sup>12</sup> <https://ies.ed.gov/learn/blog/supporting-culture-safety-and-belonging-conversation-akron-public-schools-district-leaders-about-rel#:~:text=Over%20the%20past%20two%20years,equitable%20and%20welcoming%20school%20experiences.>

<sup>13</sup> <https://citoolkit.ohioleadership.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/EachChildMeansEachChild-web.pdf>

special education. By canceling NCER and NCSER peer review panels, it is unclear how IES will follow the requirements listed in section 134(b) of the ESRA to review and evaluate all applications for grants and cooperative agreements that exceed \$100,000.

Department officials have claimed that “these contract terminations do not impact the operation of NAEP, the College Scorecard, research associated with Native American Education or students with disabilities.” However, as we have noted, that simply is not true.

At a time when the 2024 NAEP data demonstrated that students have not recovered academically since the pandemic, reading scores continue to decline, and our nation’s lowest-performing students are reading at historically low levels, it is unacceptable that the Trump Administration is gutting education research. This research is critical to ensuring our educators, parents, and policymakers understand the most effective ways to improve student outcomes. We request you provide written answers to the following questions by February 27, 2025:

1. Please describe the process employed in reviewing IES spending and the standard used to determine which contracts were canceled.
2. Please share a list of each contract that has been canceled to date at IES as of January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Please provide the specific justification for each contract that was canceled, including specific evidence of any waste, fraud, or abuse that led to the decision to terminate.
3. Which offices and staff were involved in the review and the determination of which contracts have been canceled? Were decisions made solely by DOGE staff or Department political appointees, and were career staff consulted? Please provide the specific job titles of the staff involved in the review and determination process.
4. What review was done to determine the impact of each cancelation?
5. Please provide the following analysis for the impact of each cancelation, including the number of jobs lost for each contract, the subtotal for small business contractors and contractor cumulative, and how much work was already completed on each contract prior to termination.
6. What contracts were terminated that were designed to provide information to parents regarding student outcomes, to educators to improve literacy and numeracy, and to improve student outcomes for children with disabilities?
7. Please provide a list of all meetings and communications involving anyone representing DOGE, any terminated contracts, former IES directors, and current or former Department political appointees and career employees relating to these contract terminations or the decision to terminate these contracts.
8. In making these decisions, was the National Board for Education Sciences—which was created in part “To review and regularly evaluate the work of the Institute, to ensure that scientifically valid research, development, evaluation, and statistical analysis are consistent with the standards for such activities under this title”—consulted on terminations and the work of the Institute? If so, how? What evidence did the National Board share that informed these terminations?
9. What contracts were terminated that were designed to assist in the disaggregation of school-level data?
10. What contracts were terminated that were designed to provide equitable access to education for students, whether designed to address disparities based on income, race, color, disability, or any other factor?
11. Will the Trump Administration be withdrawing the United States from participation in the upcoming Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Programme for International Student Assessment? If not, what is the Administration’s plan for continued participation in light of the termination of the related contract?
12. How will the Department’s monitoring efforts related to the implementation of the ESEA be impeded or derailed by the decision to cancel contracts that streamline administrative data collection, such as EdFacts or the Common Core of Data?

13. Section 618 of the IDEA requires that each state submit data about the infants and toddlers, birth through age 2, who receive early intervention services under Part C of the IDEA and children with disabilities, ages 3 through 21, who receive special education and related services under Part B of the IDEA. How will states comply with requirements under the IDEA when EdFacts is currently not operable?
14. What is IES' plan to ensure the integrity and continuity of NAEP in light of the cancelation of contracts related to NAEP's study design and subsequent analysis?
15. Please provide a list of all canceled evaluations of Federal programs affected.
16. Please provide a list of all canceled technical assistance requests or projects.
17. What is the Department's plan to carry out Federally-funded rural education programs if the Department canceled the contract that enables the identification of rural school districts?
18. What is the Department's plan to meet the statutory obligations under Title IV of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*?
19. Studies funded by IES help assess which education technology actually works, and these evaluations provide objective evidence to help inform technology procurement and deployment by school districts and States. How will canceling peer review of NCER and NCSEER grants affect research that provides direction to educators, education system leaders, and policymakers about what investments are ineffective or wasteful?
20. Did any Trump Administration officials or DOGE operatives consult any public or private entities that rely on Federal data to conduct research, publish data for parents and educators, or identify evidence-based practices in making determinations regarding contract terminations and canceled evaluations, and if so, who and when did such consultations occur?
21. How much funding was deobligated from terminated contracts in total and by fiscal year? How much cost avoidance was achieved in total and by fiscal year for terminated contracts? How much funding by fiscal year is newly available for obligation as a result of the contract terminations? What will the Department do with deobligated funds made available through the contract terminations?
22. The Department has indicated to congressional staff that "Any contracts to perform statutory functions will be rebid." Please provide a list of the contracts that are performing statutory functions (including appropriations directives) that have been canceled and the amount already outlaid from each contract. Please provide an analysis demonstrating the ways in which rebidding these projects mid contract will lead to greater efficiency and quality research, including all costs of terminating and rebidding each contract. Please provide a specific timeline and description for how IES will rebid these contracts to comply with statutory requirements.
23. Please identify the number of partnership projects that will end as a result of the REL contract terminations. Please provide the costs incurred in making and implementing the contract terminations and expected costs of the planned re-competition. Please identify the number of terminated partnership projects for locally-determined policy or practice on:
  - a. Students with disabilities;
  - b. Native American students; and
  - c. Students attending rural schools.

Sincerely,



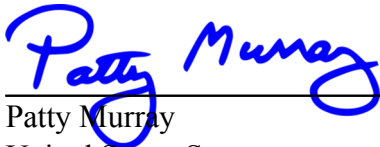
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Education and Workforce



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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



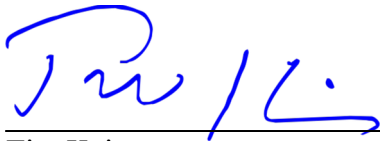
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Patty Murray  
United States Senator



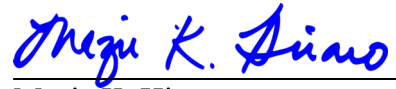
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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



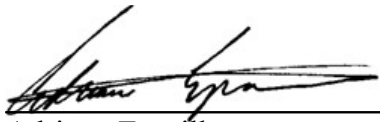
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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



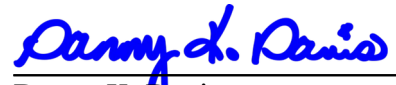
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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



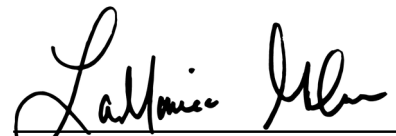
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress




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Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress



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LaMonica McIver  
Member of Congress



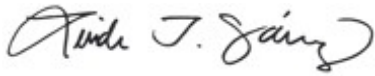
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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



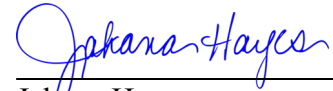
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Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



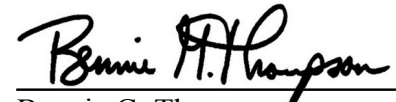
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Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress



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Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



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Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



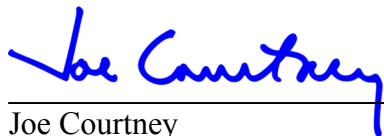
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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



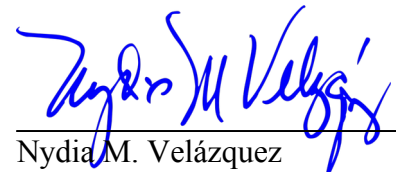
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress



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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



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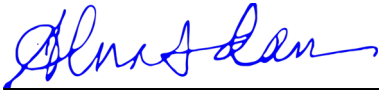
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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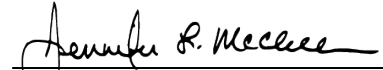
Mark Takano  
Member of Congress





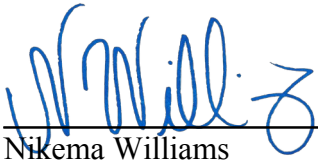
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Alma S. Adams  
Member of Congress  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee  
on Higher Education and  
Workforce Development



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Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



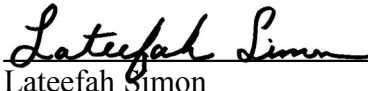
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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



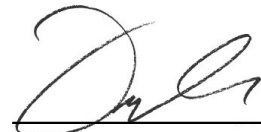
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Wesley Bell  
Member of Congress



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Lateefah Simon  
Member of Congress



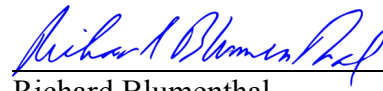
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Troy A. Carter, Sr.  
Member of Congress



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Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress



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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



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Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress



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Timothy M. Kennedy  
Member of Congress



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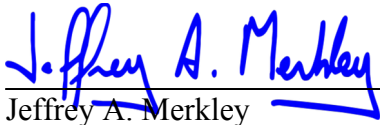
Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress



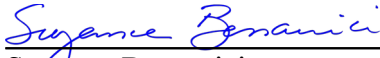
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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress





Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



Sylvester Turner  
Member of Congress



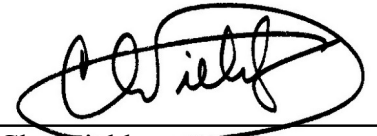
Jacky Rosen  
U.S. Senator



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



Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Cleo Fields  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



JM Tokuda  
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator



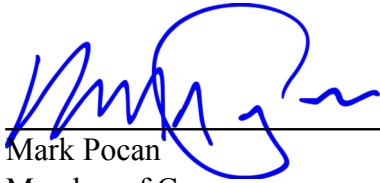
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Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



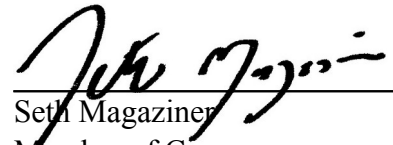
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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



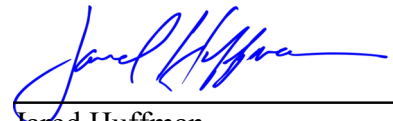
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Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



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Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress  
Ranking Member, House Natural  
Resources Committee



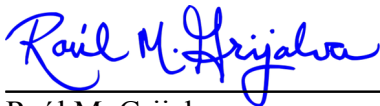
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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



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Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



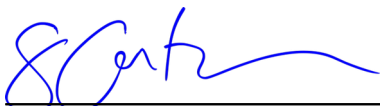
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



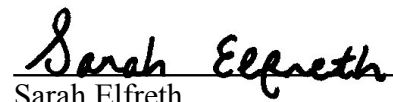
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Al Green  
Member of Congress  
Scion of the Enslaved Africans -  
Sacrificed to Make America Great



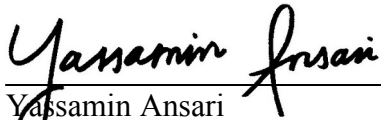
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Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



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Sarah Elfreth  
Member of Congress



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Yassamin Ansari  
Member of Congress



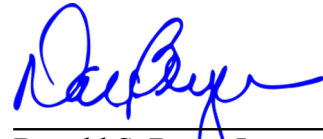
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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



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Andy Kim  
United States Senator



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



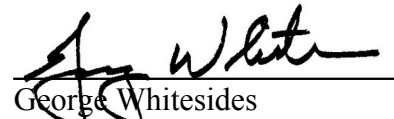
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Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



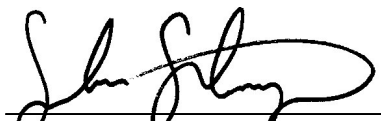
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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



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George Whitesides  
Member of Congress



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Suhas Subramanyam  
Member of Congress



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Robert J. Menendez  
Member of Congress



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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



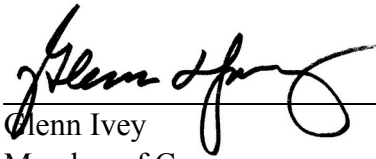
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J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



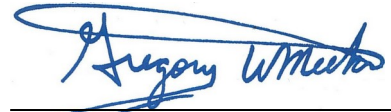
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Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



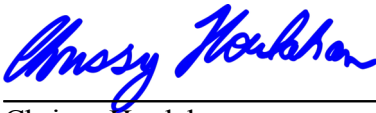
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Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress



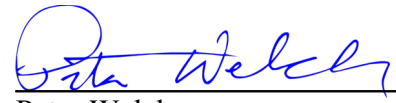
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Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



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Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



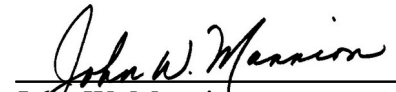
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Peter Welch  
United States Senator



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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



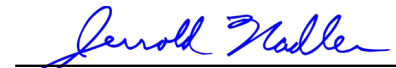
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John W. Mannion  
Member of Congress



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Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



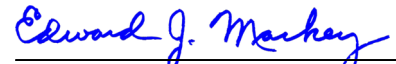
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Terrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



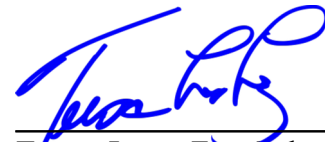
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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Angela Alsobrooks  
United States Senator



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Teresa Leger Fernandez  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



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Lauren Underwood  
Member of Congress



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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator