

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 17, 2014

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

It is our understanding the U.S. Department of Agriculture is considering regulatory changes to improve enforcement of the Horse Protection Act. As cosponsors of the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 1518/S. 1406, we urge you to ensure that any such proposal includes at least the following key elements, consistent with the PAST Act:

- **Eliminate Industry Self-Policing:** Eliminate the industry self-policing system that is based on Designated Qualified Person (DQP) licensing programs sponsored by Horse Industry Organizations (HIOs) and replace it, as envisioned in H.R. 1518/S. 1406, with USDA-licensed, trained, and assigned inspectors who will be accountable to the agency for strong enforcement of the Horse Protection Act. The industry self-policing system has been a failure, rife with conflicts of interest and unable to ensure compliance. This was recognized and documented in the USDA Inspector General's audit of 2010, and replacement of the HIO/DQP model with a system of inspectors licensed and supervised directly by the Department was the first recommendation of that audit.
- **Ban Incentives to Sore Walking Horses:** Prohibit the use – wherever the Horse Protection Act is in force - of equipment associated with soring in the three specific breeds known to be subjected to soring: Tennessee Walking Horses, Racking Horses, and Spotted Saddle Horses. The veterinary community and leading horse industry groups have called for an end to the use of “action devices” (including chains), “performance packages” (also called stacks and pads), weighted shoes, wedges, hoof bands, and other devices that are not used specifically for protective or therapeutic purposes. They’ve concluded that these devices play an integral part in the soring of these breeds and are an incentive to sore the horse. They cause pain and damage to the horse’s hoof, exacerbate the pain of chemical irritants applied to the legs, facilitate concealment of other objects that produce pain, and cause the horse’s hoof to strike the ground at an abnormal angle and with excessive force.
- **Improve the Penalty System:** Require in penalty protocols the disqualification of sore horses from participating in future shows beyond the immediate event at which soring is detected.

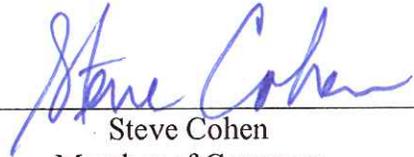
We also urge you to exercise your authority under the Horse Protection Act and its current regulations to permanently disqualify repeat violators, consistent with the PAST Act. We are outraged that the cruel practice of soring is still all too frequent decades after the Horse Protection Act becoming law, causing terrible suffering for many horses and hurting those in the walking horse show world who want to play by the rules. We commend you for your attention to this problem, which cries out for stronger action. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



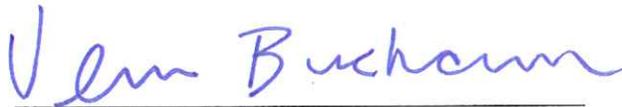
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Ed Whitfield  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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C.A. Dutch Ruppersburger  
Member of Congress



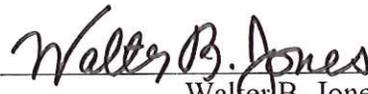
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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



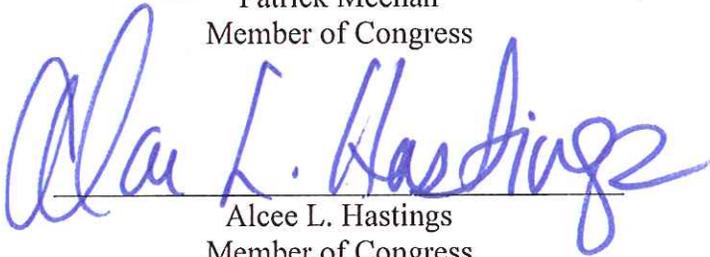
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Patrick Meehan  
Member of Congress



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Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress



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Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



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Tulsi Gabbard  
Member of Congress



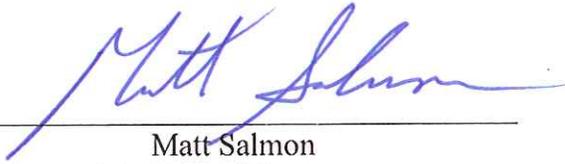
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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



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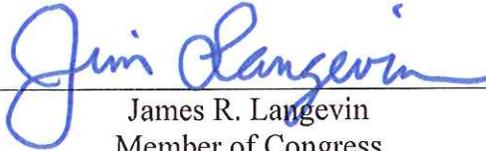
Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



Matt Salmon  
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Leonard Lance  
Member of Congress



James R. Langevin  
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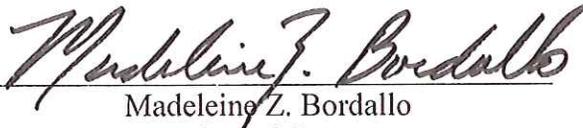
Michael G. Grimm  
Member of Congress



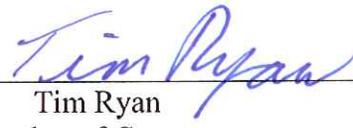
David Cicilline  
Member of Congress



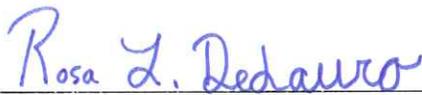
Patrick Murphy  
Member of Congress



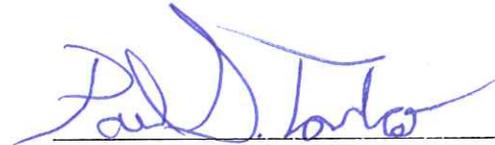
Madeleine Z. Bordallo  
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan  
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Rosa DeLauro  
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko  
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Richard Hanna  
Member of Congress



Denny Heck  
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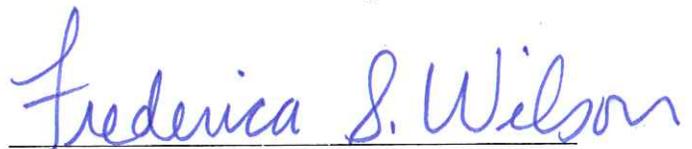
Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



Adam Smith  
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Katherine M. Clark  
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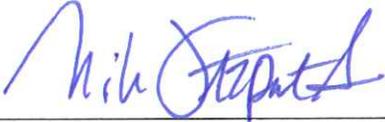
Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



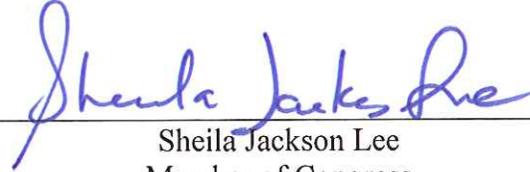
Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard  
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Michael G. Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



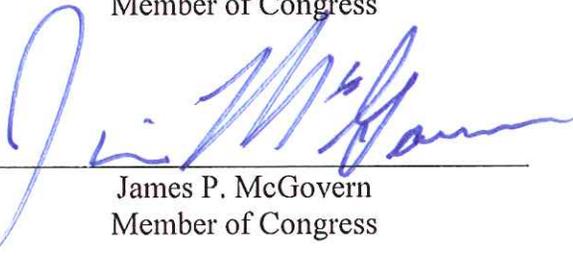
Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



Frank A. LoBiondo  
Member of Congress



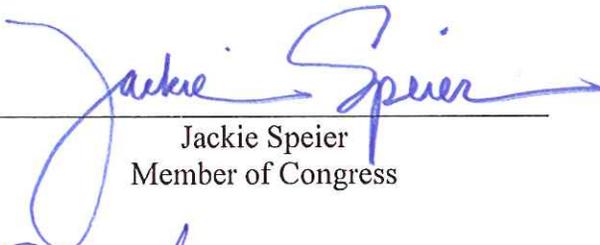
Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Member of Congress



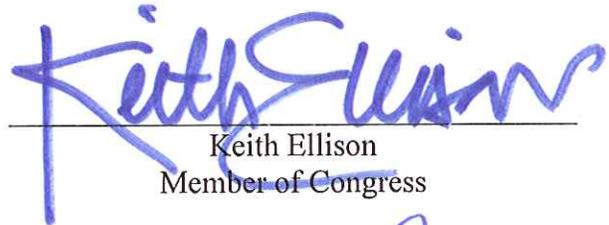
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



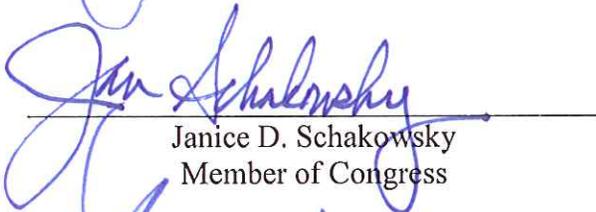
Jared Polis  
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress



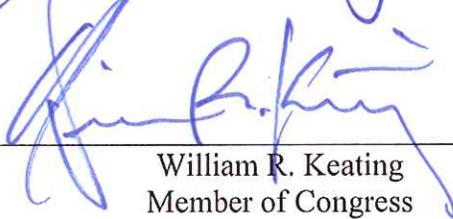
Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress



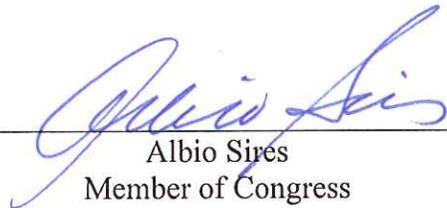
Janice D. Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Charles Rangel  
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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



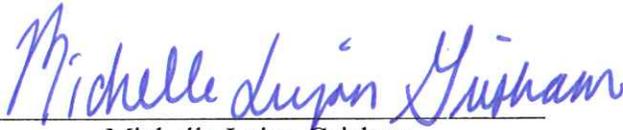
Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



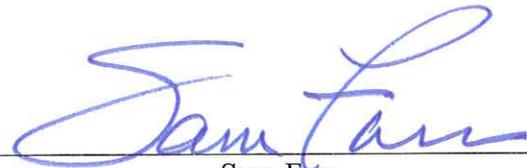
Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



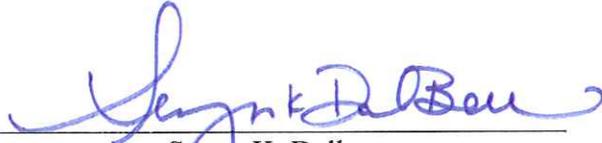
Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress



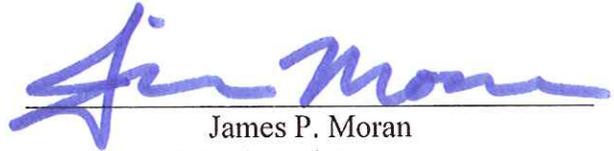
Michelle Lujan Grisham  
Member of Congress



Sam Farr  
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress



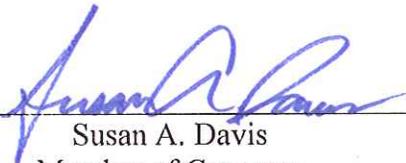
James P. Moran  
Member of Congress



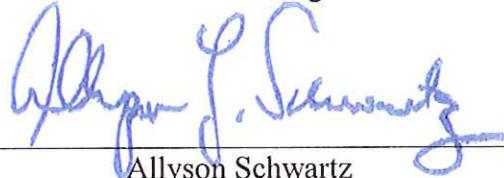
Gary G. Miller  
Member of Congress



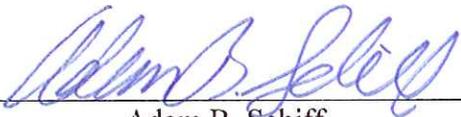
Donna F. Edwards  
Member of Congress



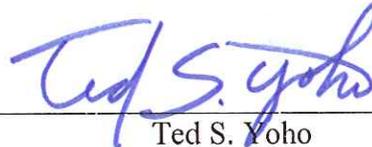
Susan A. Davis  
Member of Congress



Allyson Schwartz  
Member of Congress



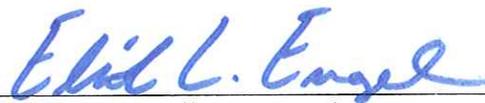
Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



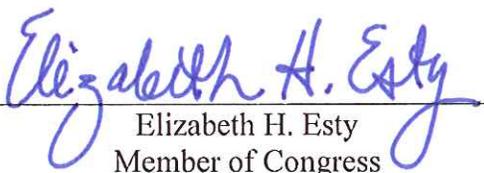
Ted S. Yoho  
Member of Congress



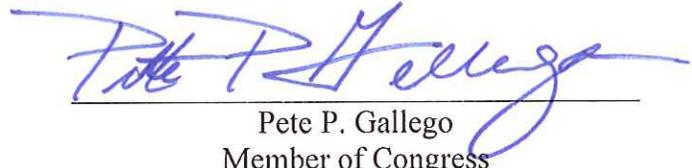
William Lacy Clay  
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Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress



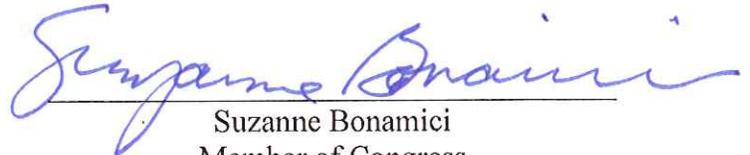
Elizabeth H. Esty  
Member of Congress



Pete P. Gallego  
Member of Congress



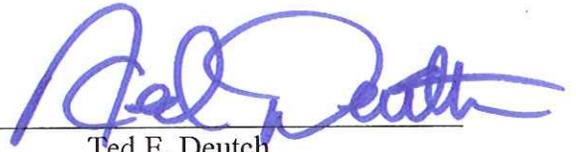
Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress



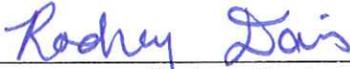
Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



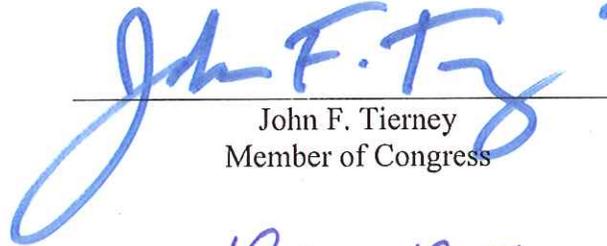
Mike Coffman  
Member of Congress



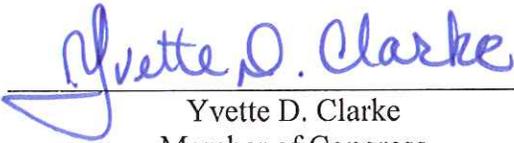
Ted E. Deutch  
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis  
Member of Congress



John F. Tierney  
Member of Congress



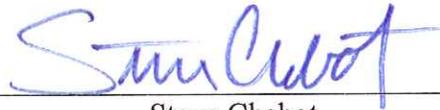
Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



Peter A. Defazio  
Member of Congress



Nita M. Lowey  
Member of Congress



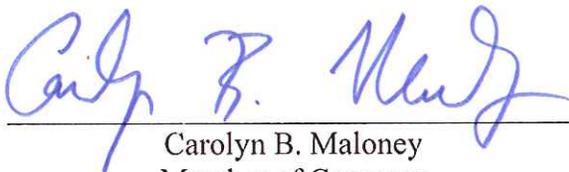
Steve Chabot  
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress



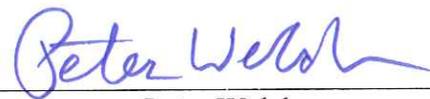
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



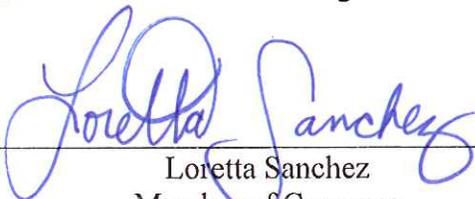
Mike Kelly  
Member of Congress



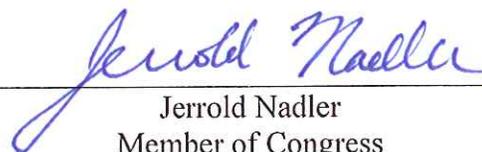
Janice Hahn  
Member of Congress



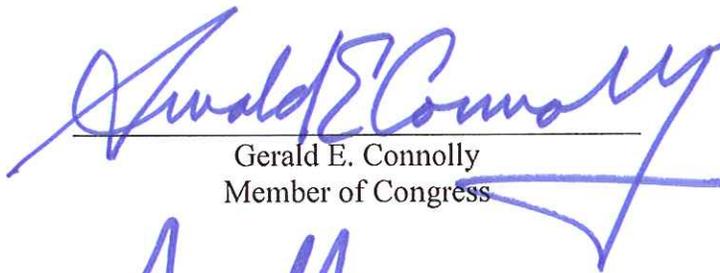
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress

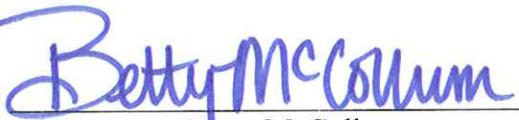


Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



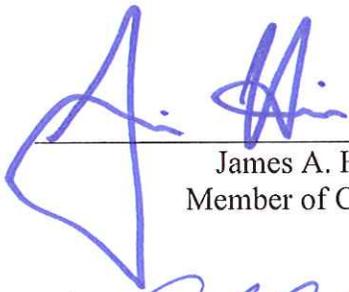
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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



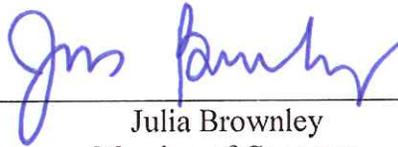
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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



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James A. Himes  
Member of Congress



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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



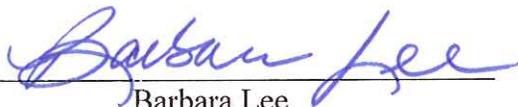
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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



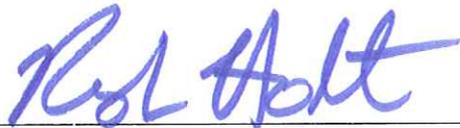
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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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Michael E. Capuano  
Member of Congress



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Rush Holt  
Member of Congress



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Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress



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Lois Capps  
Member of Congress



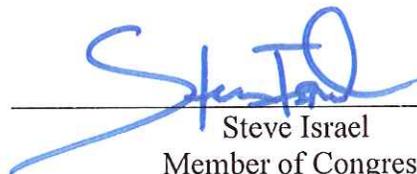
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David Scott  
Member of Congress



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Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



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Steve Israel  
Member of Congress



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Doris O. Matsui  
Member of Congress



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Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski

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Jackie Walorski  
Member of Congress

Beto O'Rourke

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Beto O'Rourke  
Member of Congress

CPG

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Christopher P. Gibson  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis

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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu

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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Raul Ruiz

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Raul Ruiz  
Member of Congress

Renee L. Ellmers

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Renee L. Ellmers  
Member of Congress

David E. Price

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David E. Price  
Member of Congress

John A. Yarmuth

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John A. Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

Kurt Schrader

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Kurt Schrader  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster

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Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle

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Michael F. Doyle  
Member of Congress

David P. Joyce

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David P. Joyce  
Member of Congress

Lynn Jenkins

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Lynn Jenkins  
Member of Congress

André Carson

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André Carson  
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell Jr.

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Bill Pascrell Jr.  
Member of Congress



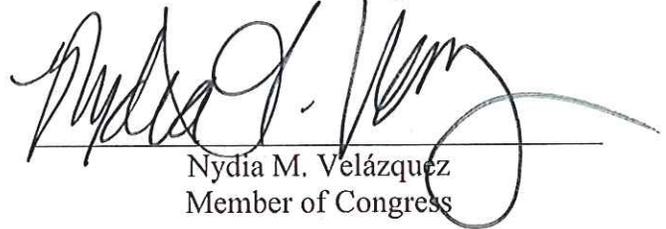
Lou Barletta  
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Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress



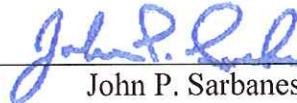
Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress



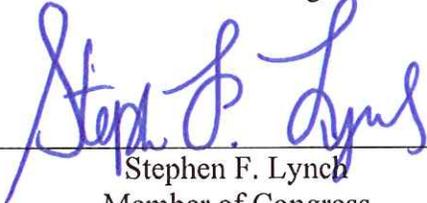
Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress



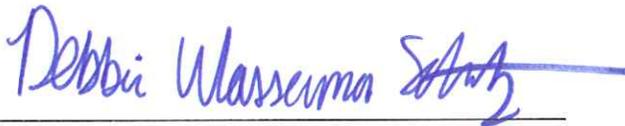
John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress



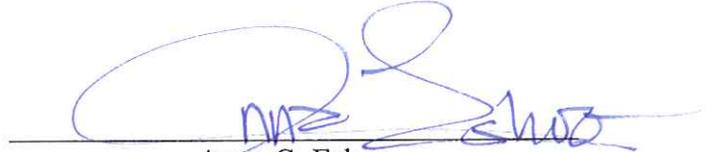
Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



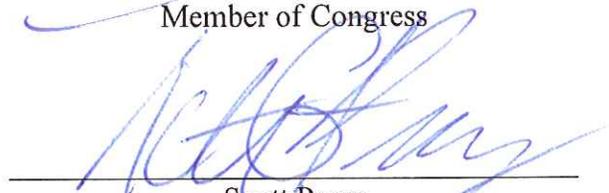
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



Chaka Fattah  
Member of Congress



Scott Perry  
Member of Congress



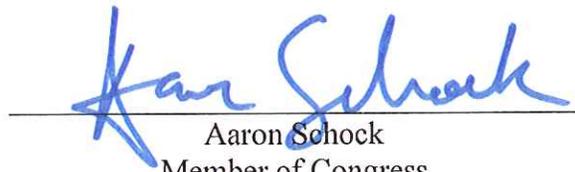
Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress



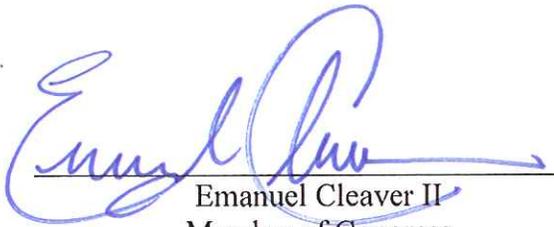
David G. Reichert  
Member of Congress



Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



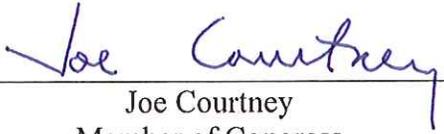
Aaron Schock  
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver II  
Member of Congress



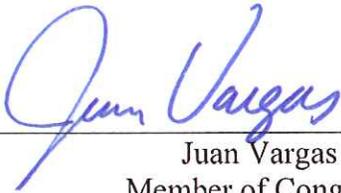
Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress



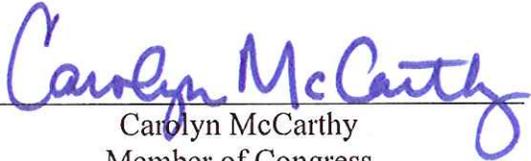
Ami Bera  
Member of Congress



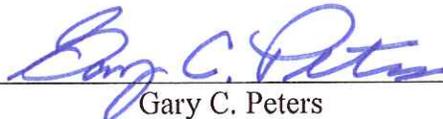
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Richard M. Nolan  
Member of Congress



Carolyn McCarthy  
Member of Congress



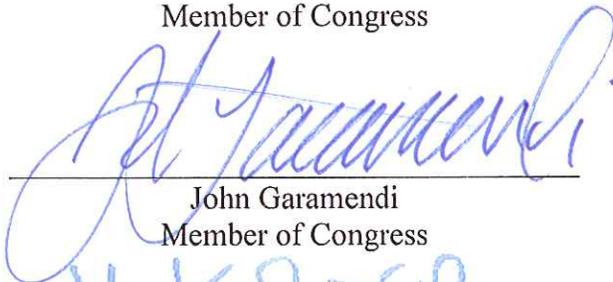
Gary C. Peters  
Member of Congress



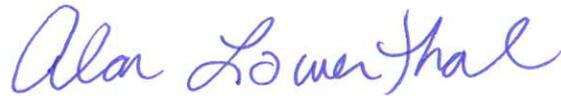
Gene Green  
Member of Congress



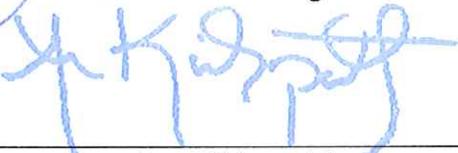
Michael R. Turner  
Member of Congress



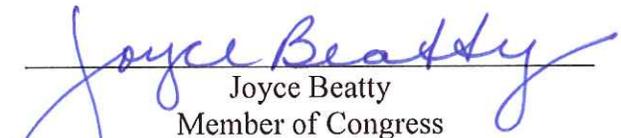
John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



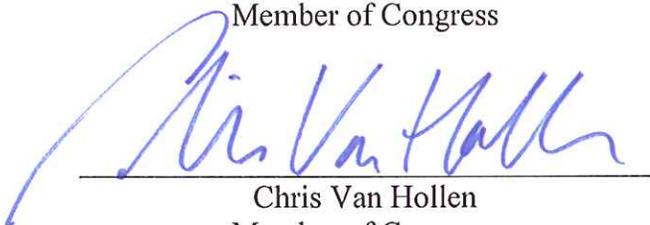
Alan S. Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick  
Member of Congress



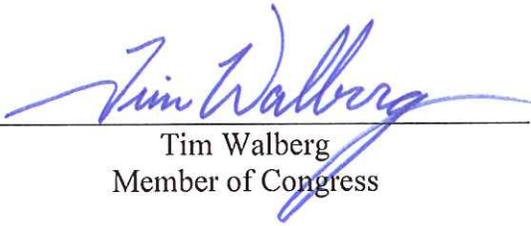
Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress

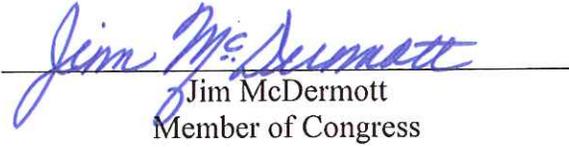


Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress



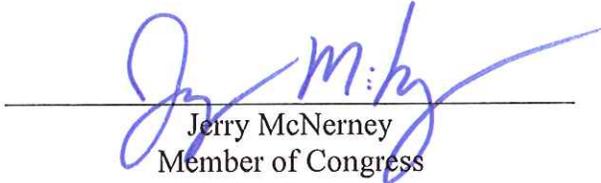
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Tim Walberg  
Member of Congress



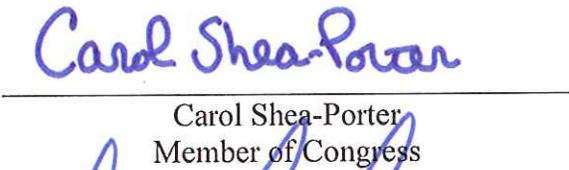
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Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress



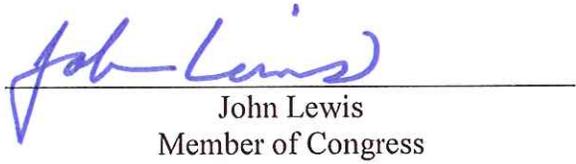
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Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress



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Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress



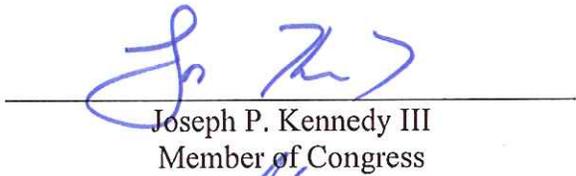
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John Lewis  
Member of Congress



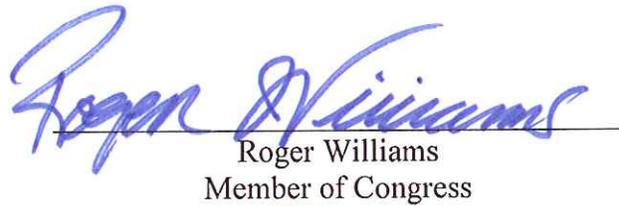
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Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress



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Joseph P. Kennedy III  
Member of Congress



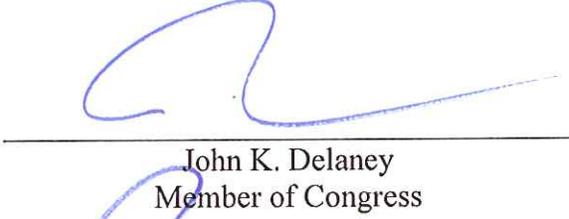
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Roger Williams  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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John K. Delaney  
Member of Congress



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Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress



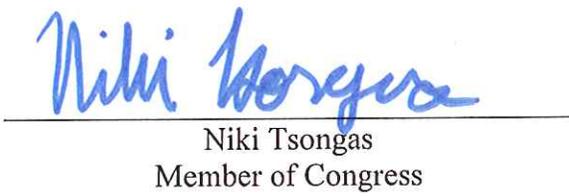
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Paul Cook  
Member of Congress



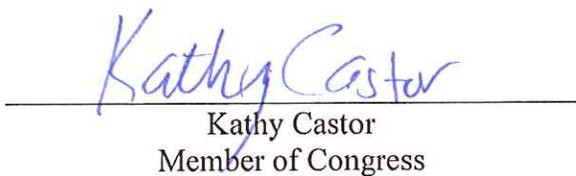
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Daniel Lipinski  
Member of Congress



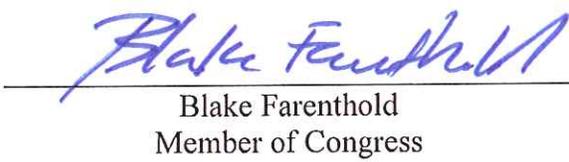
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Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress



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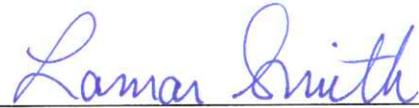
Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



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Blake Farenthold  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lamar Smith  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rubén Hinojosa  
Member of Congress

  
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Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Louise McIntosh Slaughter  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kyrsten Sinema  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Denham  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
J. Randy Forbes  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Hakeem S. Jeffries  
Member of Congress

cc: Todd Batta, Assistant Secretary, Office of Congressional Relations  
Kevin A. Shea, Administrator, APHIS  
Chester A. Gipson, DVM, Deputy Administrator, APHIS  
Rachel Cezar, DVM, Horse Protection National Coordinator