

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Room HT-2, the Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Rogers:

In the wake of Armenia's remarkable Velvet Revolution, we are writing to thank the Subcommittee for its longstanding leadership in support of both Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh). As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2020 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we ask you to include the below provisions supporting a broad-based strategic upgrade of an U.S.-Armenia partnership based upon shared interests and common values.

Support for Armenian Democracy and Economic Independence:

Armenia's newly-elected government has indicated its intentions to bolster civil society and democratic institutions. The United States Congress can aid this process by ensuring targeted assistance is given during this unprecedented transition. This is especially true with concern to the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee, which has been generous in its support of Armenia and Artsakh in previous Congresses. Armenia is in a critical moment in which a meaningful increase in FY20 technical assistance on important priorities – including for media freedom, judicial independence, anti-corruption, and civil society purposes – will likely have an exponential positive impact on the country's budding democratic institutions.

We ask the Subcommittee to support short-term increases in democracy aid over the next several fiscal years, parallel to our longer term commitment to Armenia's aid-to-trade transition. Along with the aforementioned FY20 governance-related technical assistance, we would also encourage a focus on maximizing the effectiveness of US-Armenia Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meetings. These meetings can be utilized to strategically upgrade the U.S.-Armenia Economic Task Force, and to move forward on a modern Double Tax Treaty, Social Security Totalization Agreement, debt-for-reforestation swaps, and non-stop U.S. to Armenia commercial flights.

Additionally, U.S. assistance plays a vital role in strengthening Armenia's independence by providing this pro-Western republic with a greater range of strategic options in standing up to regional powers. Military aid enables Armenia's membership in North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace, promotes NATO interoperability, and supports Armenia's participation in peacekeeping operations, which have included deployments to Afghanistan (ISAF & Resolute Support Mission) and Iraq (Polish command) to Kosovo (KFOR), Lebanon (UNIFIL), and Mali (MINUSMA). Increased Foreign Military Financing (FMF) can modernize Armenia's peacekeeping capabilities, while expanded International Military Education and Training (IMET) support would ensure U.S. training opportunities for Armenian officers, non-commissioned officers, and civil servants, advancing U.S.-Armenia defense cooperation goals. As such, we ask that the following provisions be included in the bill:

- **Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$60,000,000 shall be made available for economic, governance, and rule of law assistance to Armenia. An increase in funding specifically to the Department of State's Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia and the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Europe and Eurasia should also be made available for these purposes.**
- **Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$10,000,000 shall be made available for military assistance to Armenia.**

Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh):

Over the course of the past 21 years, this panel has invested wisely in a negotiated peace by providing funding for maternal health care and clean drinking water projects in Artsakh. Our aid program currently supports the HALO Trust's landmine and unexploded ordnance clearance effort, which should be expanded geographically to include a greater number of at-risk communities. We also support additional Artsakh-based humanitarian priorities, including rehabilitation services, like those provided by the Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre, as well as potential World Vision and Teach for America projects.

- **We request that the Subcommittee include language ensuring that not less than \$6 million in Fiscal Year 2020 aid be appropriated to Nagorno Karabakh, including for expanded de-mining efforts, rehabilitation programs, and other humanitarian projects.**
- **In the interest of effective U.S. oversight of our aid programs, we request that the Department of State and USAID lift any official or unofficial restrictions on U.S. travel, communication, or contacts with Artsakh government officials or civil society stakeholders.**
- **Include language ensuring that not less than \$4 million is appropriated to support implementation of the Royce-Engel peace proposals, prioritizing the placement of OSCE-monitored, advanced gunfire locator systems and sound-ranging equipment to determine the source of attacks along the line of contact.**

Azerbaijan:

Azerbaijan has continued to inhibit the pro-peace mission of the OSCE Minsk Group in recent years. It continues to obstruct implementation of the bipartisan Royce-Engel accountability and peace proposals, which could finally bring an end to this lasting conflict. In light of this refusal to cease its threat of violence and the continuous arms build-up and escalating aggression against Armenia and Artsakh, we urge the Subcommittee to:

- **Suspend U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan until its government ceases its attacks against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, ends its threat of renewed war, and agrees to the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts.**
- **Add the following certification requirement to the President's waiver authority under Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act: " In the last fiscal year, Azerbaijan has not taken hostile action, either through military force or incitement, including but not limited to threatening pronouncements by government officials toward Armenia or Nagorno Karabakh, and has both stated and demonstrated its commitment to pursuing a lasting peace with Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh through solely non-violent means."**

Regional Safe Haven for Middle East Refugees:

Over 25,000 individuals from Syria have sought safety in Armenia, which, despite being a small country, has received only modest levels of U.S. and international relief and resettlement assistance to accommodate this influx of refugees. Armenia has demonstrated its willingness to play a larger role as a regional safe haven for those fleeing persecution and death in the Middle East, but lacks the financial resources to offer the transition assistance needed by families fleeing violence.

We ask the Subcommittee to appropriate at least \$20,000,000 to help Armenia provide transition support to refugees from Syria and throughout the Middle East who have found safe haven in Armenia.

Again, thank you for your leadership on the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs. Taking these steps will continue to build on the U.S.-Armenia strategic relationship and help to grow the seeds of pro-democratic and civil society institutions in Armenia. We urge the Subcommittee to invest in peace and assist Armenia and Artsakh at this exciting time of continued development.


We appreciate your consideration of these requests.

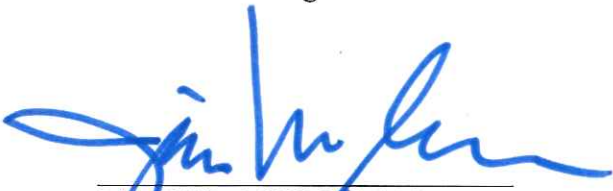
Sincerely,



FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress


JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress


ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress


DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress



JAMES P. MCGOVERN
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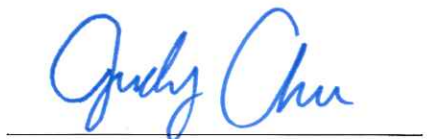

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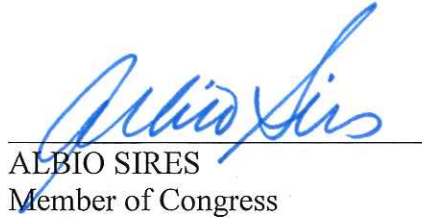
RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY
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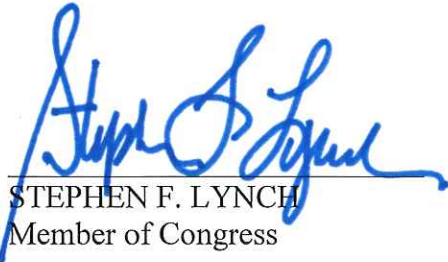
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DEVIN NUNES
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TONY CARDENAS
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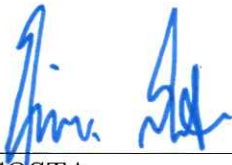
RO KHANNA
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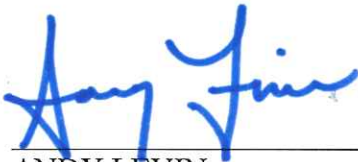
JIMMY GOMEZ
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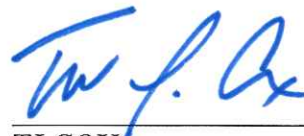
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