

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2018

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Room HT-2, the Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

We are writing to thank the Subcommittee for its longstanding leadership in support of Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) – especially as we celebrate a century of U.S.-Armenia relations. We encourage you, as you work with your colleagues in preparing the Fiscal Year 2019 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, to advance U.S. interests by strengthening Armenia's independence, promoting a lasting and stable peace in Artsakh, and supporting Armenia as a regional safe haven for at-risk refugees in the Middle East.

Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh):

Over the course of the past 20 years, U.S. aid has provided critical aid to Artsakh, including by supporting a negotiated and democratic resolution of outstanding security and status issues between Artsakh and Azerbaijan. U.S. aid currently provides for funding for maternal health care and clean drinking water, and the latter stages of a multi-year HALO Trust land mine and unexploded ordnance clearance effort. These de-mining efforts have the support of the administration, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who submitted a written response to questions in June 2017, stating: “We remain focused on completing demining as quickly and thoroughly as possible.”

Additionally, there is also a great need for water systems as well as rehabilitation centers for children, adults and the elderly with physical and cognitive disabilities.

- **We request that the Subcommittee include language ensuring that not less than \$6 million in Fiscal Year 2019 aid be appropriated to Nagorno Karabakh, including for de-mining, rehabilitation programs, and water supply systems.**
- **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."**

Support for Armenia's Independence:

We recognize the Subcommittee's longstanding leadership in strengthening the U.S.-Armenia partnership, a relationship founded upon a shared commitment to faith, freedom, and democratic values. U.S. assistance has empowered progress in the areas of democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression, and free enterprise. Armenia provides a safe haven for refugees, participates in U.S.-led peace-keeping deployments, supports the peaceful resolution of regional disputes, and cooperates, both bilaterally and multilaterally, on political, economic, military, and cultural issues.

Our nations continue in a spirit of cooperation and we commend this Subcommittee's leadership in this process, especially when considering Armenia's aid-to-trade transition. It is in this spirit that we call upon you to continue encouraging the Administration to make full use of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) and U.S.-Armenia Economic Task Force, and - most urgently - to move forward with the long-overdue negotiation of a modern U.S. Armenia Double Tax Treaty.

Blockaded by Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia confronts serious challenges to its security and its sovereignty. U.S. economic and military assistance plays a vital role in strengthening Armenia's independence, 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

NATO's Partnership for Peace, promotes NATO interoperability, and supports Armenia's participation in peacekeeping operations, including: deployments to countries ranging from Afghanistan (ISAF & Resolute Support Mission) and Iraq (Polish command) to Kosovo (KFOR), Lebanon (UNIFIL), and Mali (MINUSMA) – all since 2004.

Increased Foreign Military Financing (FMF) can modernize the Training Center for Armenia's Peacekeeping Brigade, bringing this facility up to NATO/Partnership for Peace specifications, helping Armenia to deploy a larger number of highly-trained peacekeepers and support the creation of a Role 2 Field Hospital and Explosive Ordnance Disposal/Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices Engineering unit to support peacekeeping missions. Increased International Military Educational Training (IMET) can expand U.S. training opportunities for Armenian officers, NCOs, 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 \$30,000,000 shall be made available for economic assistance to Armenia.**
- **Of the funds appropriated by this Act, not less than \$10,000,000 shall be made available for military assistance to Armenia.**
- **The Committee encourages the Millennium Challenge Corporation, upon Armenia meeting its merit-based governance criteria, to give full and fair consideration to Armenia for a Science, Technology, Education, and Math education grant for its public school system.**

Regional Safe Haven for Middle East Refugees:

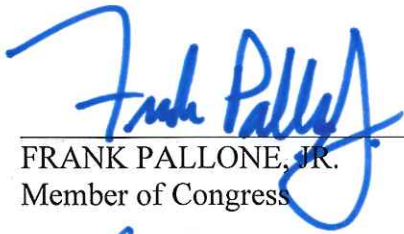
Nearly 25,000 individuals from Syria have sought safety in Armenia, which, despite being a small country with a per capita GDP of less than \$4,000 per year, has received only modest levels of U.S. and international relief and resettlement assistance to accommodate this influx of refugees. Armenia has 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. Areas of greatest need include short-term housing/rental assistance and support for social and economic integration.

- **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**

Thank you for your leadership on the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs. We are grateful for your role in strengthening the relationship between the U.S. and Armenia, supporting aid to Nagorno Karabakh, and on all the issues we have raised.

We appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress

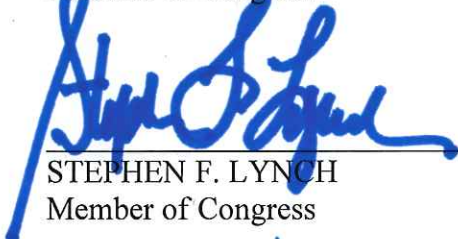

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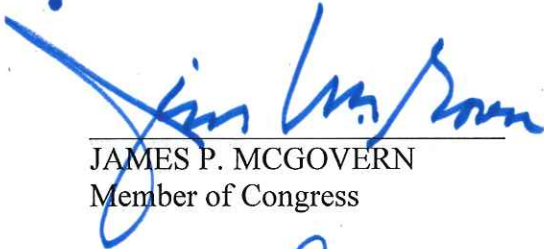

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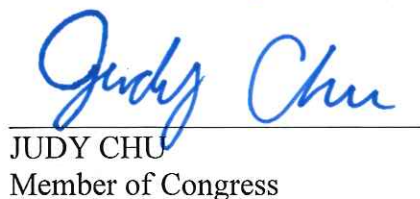

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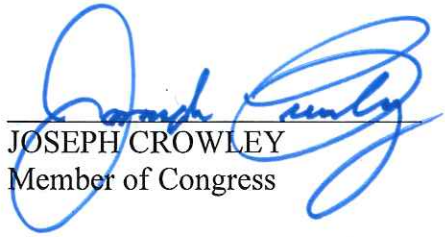

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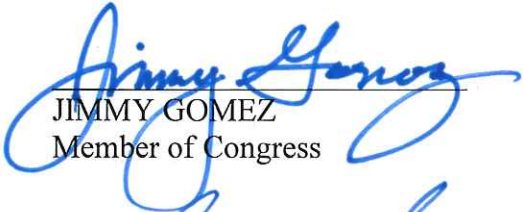

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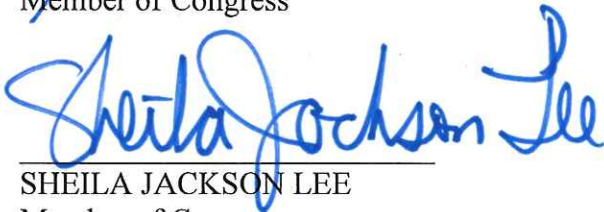
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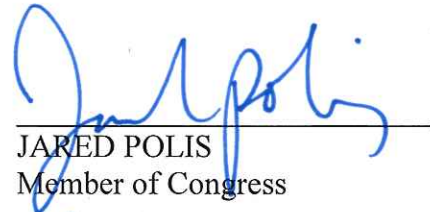
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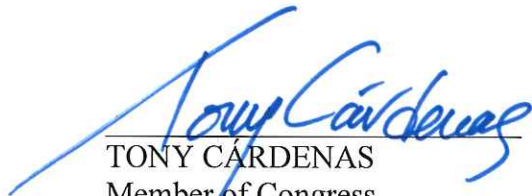
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