

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 5, 2018

The Honorable Mike R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We are deeply concerned by the Department's decision to halt issuance of visas to same-sex domestic partners of foreign diplomats and officials and employees from international organizations like the United Nations (UN). We strongly urge you to reconsider your decision. This policy discriminates against gay and lesbian international civil servants, many of whom are citizens of countries that outlaw same-sex marriage.

On October 1, 2018, the State Department formally halted issuance of new visas to same-sex domestic partners of foreign diplomats and officials and employees from international organizations. It also notified all current same-sex domestic partner visa-holders that they have until December 31 to present a certificate of marriage if they wish to keep their visas. Failure to do so could result in deportation 30 days thereafter.

Only 26 countries—a mere 13 percent of UN member states—allow same-sex couples to marry. In reversing the State Department's 2009 decision to provide visas to same-sex domestic partners, your department fails to acknowledge that in most of the world, same-sex domestic partners do not enjoy the possibility of marriage—and your decision undermines the validity of these diplomats' relationship.

The State Department justifies its decision by pointing to the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling, but U.S. case law is an irrelevant standard when it comes to writing rules that only apply to foreign diplomats. While same-sex marriage has been legal in the U.S. for more than three years, the worldwide struggle for LGBTQI rights continues and U.S. leadership on this issue is more important than ever.

While the State Department has said it will provide a burdensome "limited exception" for diplomats from countries where same-sex marriage is illegal, the Department provides no similar

exception for personnel from international organizations—an inconsistent and unnecessary exclusion.

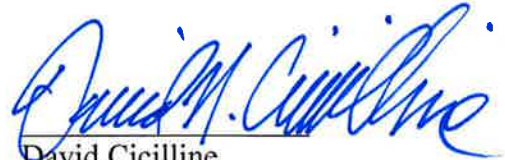
Additionally, such a policy could create a problem for our own diplomats as well. Because countries issue visas in a reciprocal manner, there is a potential that this policy could open up our diplomats to retaliation abroad — something that is not only unjust but potentially puts their physical safety at risk in certain parts of the world.

The United States must maintain its moral leadership on all human rights issues, including those affecting LGBTQI people. This policy sends the wrong message that the U.S. is not welcoming of all people. It also needlessly excludes personnel from international organizations, and places an unnecessary burden on diplomats from countries that do not currently allow same-sex marriage. We urge the State Department to reconsider its decision.

Sincerely,



Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress



David Cicilline
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



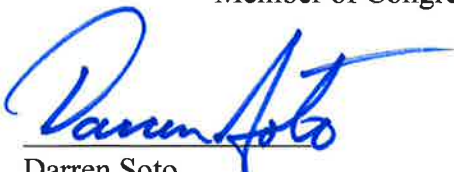
Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



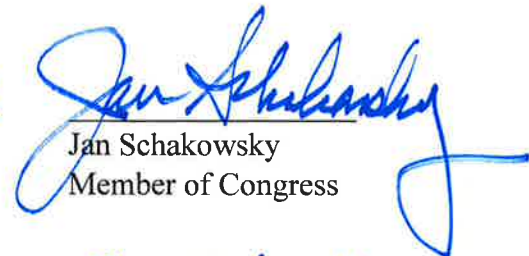
Frank Pallone, Jr.
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Darren Soto
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
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Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



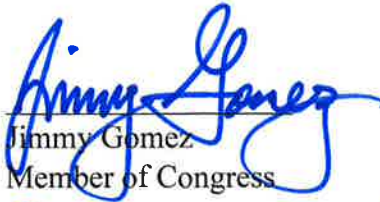
Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



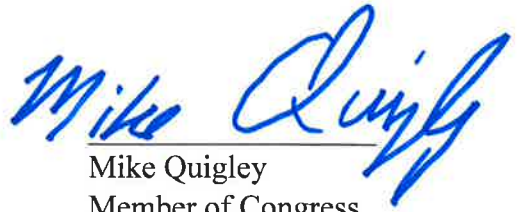
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress




Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



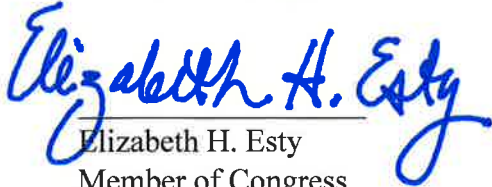
Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Member of Congress



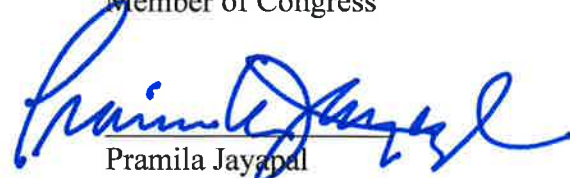
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



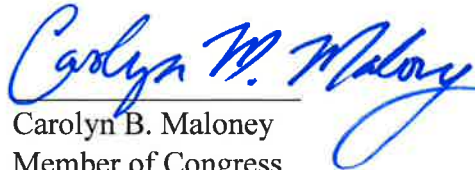
Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



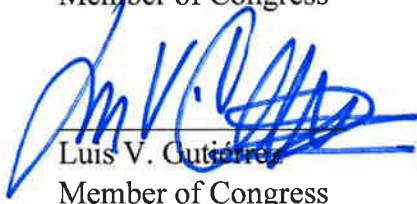
Nydia M. Velázquez
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Betty McCollum
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Peter Welch
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Luis V. Gutiérrez
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Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



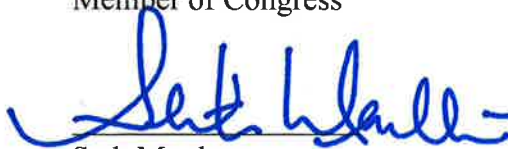
John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



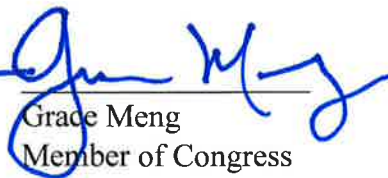
Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress



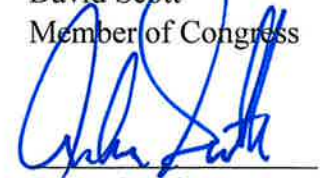
David Scott
Member of Congress




Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



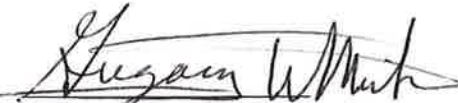
Grace Meng
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Adam Smith
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John Lewis
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Gregory W. Meeks
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Mike Thompson
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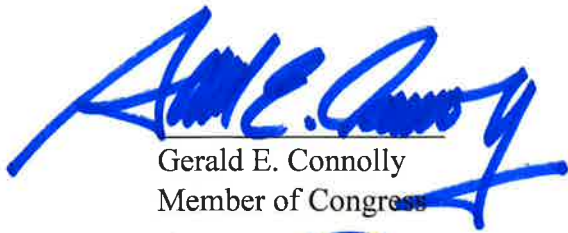
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

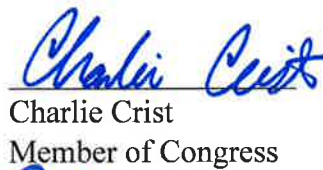


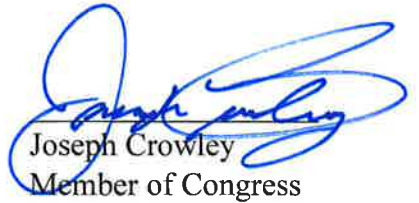
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress




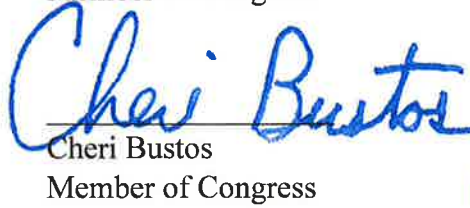
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress


Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

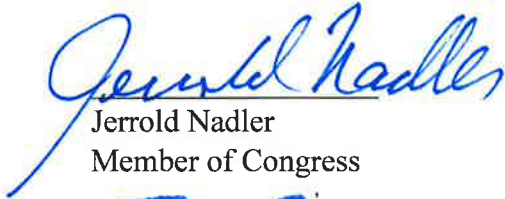

Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

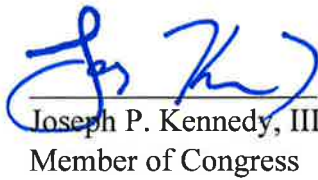

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress


Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

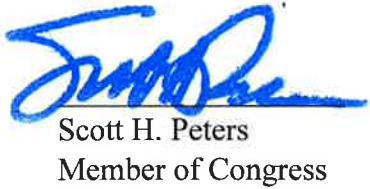

Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress


Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress


Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress


Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

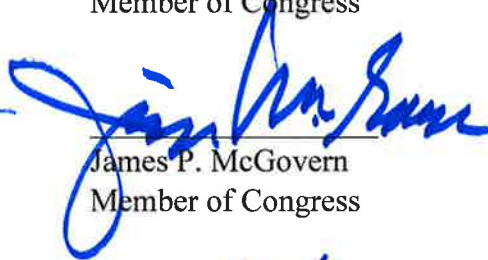

Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress

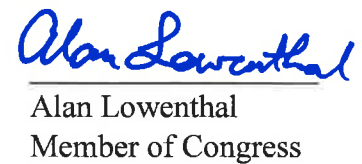

Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress


A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

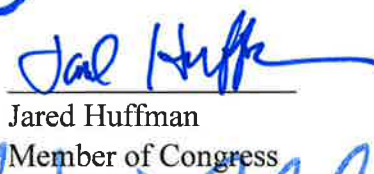

Jim Himes
Member of Congress


Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

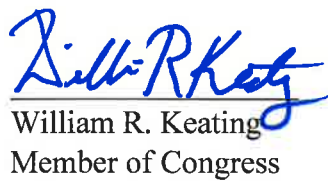

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

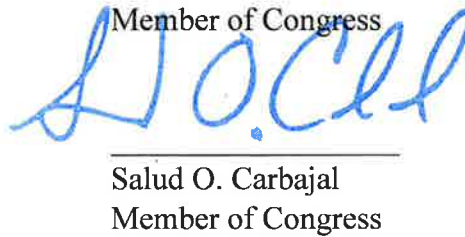

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress


Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

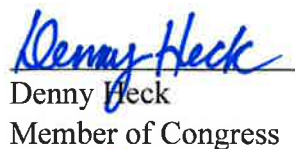

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

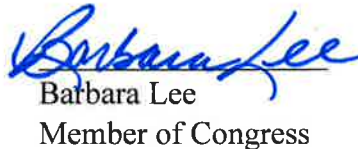

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

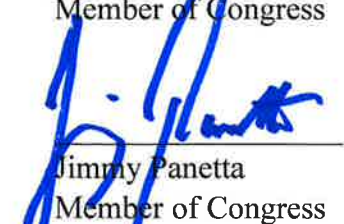

William R. Keating
Member of Congress


Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

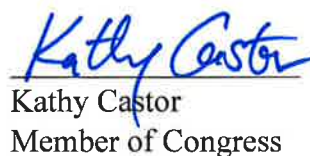

José E. Serrano
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Barbara Lee
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Jimmy Panetta
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Keith Ellison
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Rosa L. DeLauro
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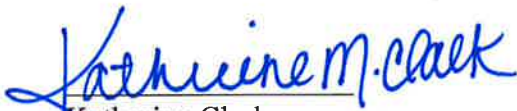
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Colleen Hanabusa
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Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



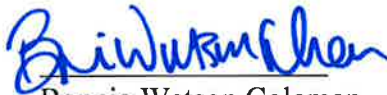
Katherine Clark
Member of Congress



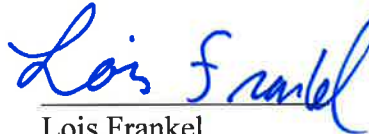
Dina Titus
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Paul D. Tonko
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Lois Frankel
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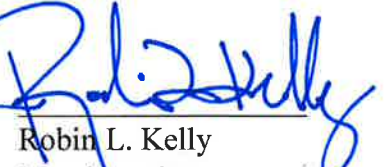
Richard M. Nolan
Member of Congress



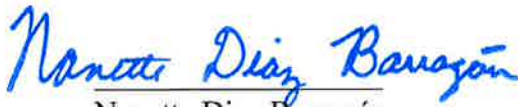
Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman
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Lucille Roybal-Allard
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Derek Kilmer
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Donald Norcross
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Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



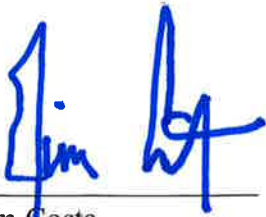
John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



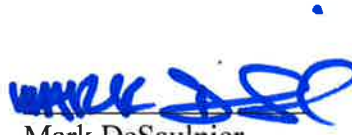
Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
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Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress



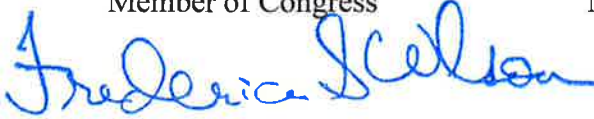
Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress



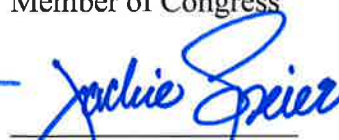
Bill Foster
Member of Congress



James R. Langevin
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Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



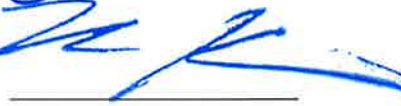
Jackie Speier
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Albio Sires
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Dave Loebsack
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Ruben J. Kihuen
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Suzan K. DelBene
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Ben Ray Lujan
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Debbie Dingell
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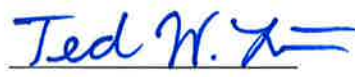
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