

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 9, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today to expand on concerns previously expressed by Members of Congress pertaining to the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals living in countries included in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement. Specifically, we are concerned about recent actions taken by the Malaysian government against the transgender community and the missed opportunity presented by the TPP to combat the anti-LGBT actions of multiple countries in the agreement.

As we have expressed in the past, we deeply appreciate that your Administration has been a champion for LGBT individuals in the United States and across the globe. By speaking out in favor of equality for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, you have made the United States an example for the world. However, we believe more can and must be done to protect LGBT people abroad, and the TPP offers a clear opportunity to leverage changes in countries persecuting these individuals.

We are particularly concerned with the continued persecution of the transgender community in Malaysia. Last year, Malaysian officials entered a private event and arrested the nine attendees under a law that criminalizes transgender individuals wearing clothing matching the gender with which they identify. The court subsequently sentenced the nine women to fines and two of the women to jail.

In April, Malaysian religious authorities raided an event benefitting the transgender community, resulting in the arrest and potential imprisonment of the event organizer and the threat of imprisonment against a lawyer who defended the transgender attendees. These are just two examples in a long history of abuses by Malaysian authorities, incidents which underscore the concerns previously raised about severe human rights abuses and penal codes permitting violence against LGBT people in Malaysia and Brunei.

For these reasons, we urge you to use the opportunity presented by the United States' inclusion in the Trans-Pacific Partnership to explicitly protect LGBT individuals in the agreement's participating countries. This agreement encompasses nearly forty percent of the global economy

and the United States has the largest economy of the twelve participating countries. The United States should use this position of strength to advocate for the fair treatment of the LGBT community in Malaysia and Brunei. Unfortunately, while the Administration attempted to address other human rights issues in our partner countries, the agreement and side letters as negotiated do not include protections for LGBT individuals.

Given the continued prevalence of attacks on the LGBT community in Malaysia and Brunei, we urge you to consider renegotiating the agreement to include protections for gender and sexual minorities and further demand that these countries treat all of their citizens as equal under the law regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

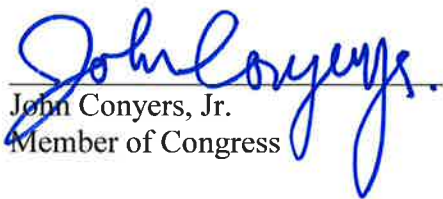
Sincerely,



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress



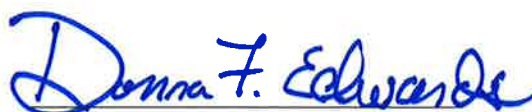
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
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Donna F. Edwards
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Michael M. Honda
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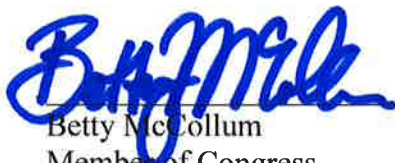
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



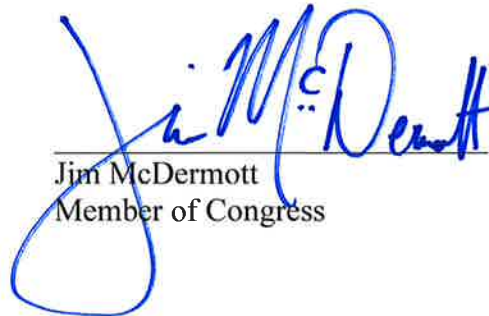
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress




Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



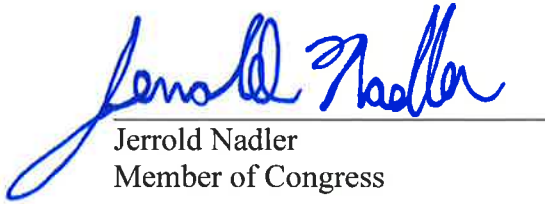
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



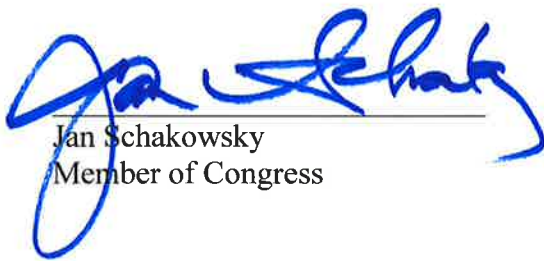
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
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Jerry McNerney
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Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress


Loretta Sanchez
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Jan Schakowsky
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