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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 18, 2015

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

As members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community we support your Administration's focus on LGBT rights and efforts to help end persecution in countries across the globe. Your commitment to equality is unrivaled by previous administrations and we have been proud to work with you to make progress on these issues. We stand strongly behind the Administration policy articulated by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2011, stating, "The Obama Administration defends the human rights of LGBT people as part of our comprehensive human rights policy and as a priority of our foreign policy," and Secretary of State John Kerry's declaration in 2014 that "LGBT rights are human rights, and human rights are LGBT rights."

Last year, the Republic of The Gambia implemented a law criminalizing homosexuality, targeting individuals perceived to be LGBT with harassment, detention, and life in prison. Shortly after implementation of the law, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) announced action to revoke Gambia's trade preferences previously enjoyed under the *African Growth and Opportunity Act of 2000* (AGOA). According to the USTR, the decision was made in part due to the enactment of the anti-gay law.

In light of the decision to end trade preferences for Gambia, we write today to ask for clarification on the inclusion of Brunei and Malaysia in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations. These two countries are responsible for severe human rights abuses, including adopting penal codes permitting the imprisonment and physical harm of LGBT people. It seems inconsistent for the United States to expand trade privileges to these two countries while taking action against Gambia.

Last year, 119 Representatives and 10 Senators wrote to the Administration urging action be taken to address these human rights abuses before proceeding with the TPP agreement. To our knowledge, no progress has been made on that front. Brunei continues to move forward with full implementation of a strict penal code mandating the stoning to death of LGBT citizens;

similarly, Malaysia has not taken action to end its persecution of LGBT individuals. Despite these abuses, the Administration continues to include them in negotiations around the TPP and lists them as intended signatories to the trade agreement.

We urge you to bring consistency to the Administration's foreign and trade policy. The LGBT community looks to your Administration to fight for human rights across the globe and we hope you will continue this record of equality by removing Brunei and Malaysia from the TPP if they neglect to address these abuses.

Sincerely,



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



David Cicilline
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable John F. Kerry, Secretary, U.S. Department of State
The Honorable Michael Froman, U.S. Trade Representative, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative