

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 30, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
United States Senate Committee
On Appropriations
Washington, District of Columbia 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee
On Appropriations
Washington, District of Columbia 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, District of Columbia 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, District of Columbia 20515

Dear Chairman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Shelby, and Ranking Member Lowey:

We write to bring your attention to an important issue that will have a dramatic and lasting impact on our region: the possible forced sale of Plum Island to the highest bidder. As Members from the Long Island Sound region, we remain deeply concerned about the effects of a forced sale and development of the Island on the landscape and ecological value of the area. As explained further below, the rationale for selling the Island to the highest bidder no longer makes economic sense, and we respectfully request that the Committee work with us in providing the General Services Administration (GSA) with the flexibility it needs to transfer the Island to another federal agency such as the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

The environmental significance of the Plum Island area cannot be overstated. The 840-acre Plum Island and adjacent Great Gull and Little Gull Islands were identified for protection in 2006 by the federally created Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative, which singled them out for their “exemplary” ecological value. The final Environmental Impact Statement documents the vast number of species that may be impacted by possible development scenarios, including at least two endangered species – the piping plover and the roseate tern. In addition, development on Plum Island may affect the endangered Atlantic Ridley Sea Turtle and three other New York State-listed endangered or threatened species.

As you know, current federal law requires the GSA to sell the Island.¹ We strongly believe that the GSA should proceed with its longstanding existing process to dispose of excess federal personal property, through which it would allow any interested federal agency to take

¹ See Sec. 538 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-74).

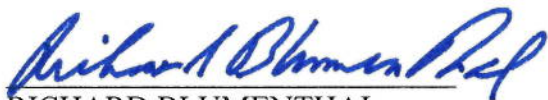
federal personal property, through which it would allow any interested federal agency to take transfer of the Island. We also strongly believe that either the NPS or the FWS would be interested in taking possession if given the opportunity. However, Congress must first give these agencies the option to determine if this is even feasible. In addition, we stand ready to help any federal agency that commits to preserving the Island to identify a private partnership in order to provide some of the resources necessary for ongoing oversight and maintenance of the property. Below, we have provided draft legislative language that we would like included in any future appropriations bills:

(a) Repeal of Requirement in Public Law 112-74- Section 538 of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2012 (6 U.S.C. 190 note; division D of Public Law 112-74) is repealed.

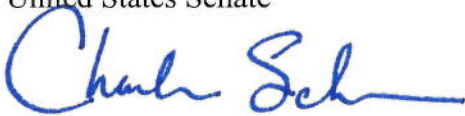
The original intent of the sale was to offset some of the cost of building the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Manhattan, Kansas and remediating the Island. The estimated \$32.85 million² that the federal government would receive from any sale pales in comparison to the overall cost of the state-of-the-art Kansas facility. And while millions of dollars will be required to remediate the Island, we believe its environmental value is priceless and that selling it does more harm than good. From personal visits, photos and conversations with experts, we know that the Island is a critical habitat and a pristine landscape that must be protected in perpetuity.

We recognize the GSA is at least eight to nine years away from selling the Island, and that the House and Senate Appropriations Committees are far along in the FY15 appropriations process. Please take this letter as a first step in working with us to provide the GSA with the flexibility it needs to ultimately transfer the Island to a federal agency charged with protecting and preserving public lands.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



TIM BISHOP
Member of Congress



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senate



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress

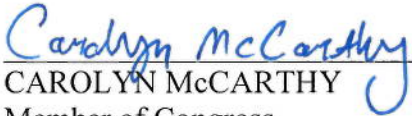
² The Nature Conservancy commissioned appraisal completed in June 2014 by a New York state certified appraiser familiar with eastern Long Island.



ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress



PETER T. KING
Member of Congress



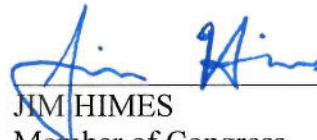
CAROLYN MCCARTHY
Member of Congress



STEVE ISRAEL
Member of Congress



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



JIM HIMES
Member of Congress



ELIZABETH H. ESTY
Member of Congress

CC: Senator Mary Landrieu, Chairwoman: U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security

Senator Dan Coats, Ranking Member: U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security

Senator Tom Udall, Chairman: U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on
Financial Services and General Government

Senator Mike Johanns, Ranking Member: U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government

Representative John Carter, Chairman: U.S. House of Representatives Committee on
Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

Representative David Price, Ranking Member: U.S. House of Representatives Committee
on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

Representative Andrew Crenshaw, Chairman: U.S. House of Representatives Committee
on Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government