

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As you consider funding for appropriations for Fiscal Year 2019, we request that you include robust funding for programs affecting refugees and other vulnerable migrant populations. This funding helps support our national security and foreign policy interests by maintaining support for international humanitarian assistance and displacement assistance, including refugee resettlement. It is crucially important that the Committee allocate adequate funding to the Department of Health and Human Service's Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account and the Department of State's International Affairs accounts, including the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), the Emergency Refugee and Migration (ERMA), and the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) accounts.

Once again, the Administration has proposed eliminating the ERMA account, which provides vital funding for the United States to respond to unforeseen humanitarian emergencies. At a time of global instability, support for ERMA is necessary to respond immediately to unanticipated crises and deliver lifesaving assistance. This account strengthens regional stability and promotes our national security interests. Many nations hosting substantial numbers of refugees are among the least developed nations which do not have adequate resources to support these populations on their own and therefore require ERMA support. Eliminating this critical account would betray our humanitarian commitments and damage relations with countries that look to the United States for assistance as a world leader.

The United States must not falter in its commitment to humanitarian aid when 65.6 million people are displaced worldwide and need help. As you know, the United States has a proud tradition of funding life-saving humanitarian assistance, and such support is beneficial to both our country and the international community. It advances our national security interest by working to support humanitarian assistance in conflict zones, as well as the stability of our allies and partners hosting refugees – strengthening our strategic security goals. We are concerned that underfunding these accounts will create a funding void that may not be filled. It is more important than ever for the United States clearly reaffirm its commitment to providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance to the world's most vulnerable populations. Accordingly, we request that the Committee allocate the following funds:

- \$2.188 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services' Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account;
- \$3.604 billion for the Department of State's Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account;
- \$50 million for the Department of State's Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account; and
- \$4.4 billion for the U.S. Agency for International Development's International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account.

The United States has a proud moral tradition and heritage of aiding refugees who need our help when their homelands are in turmoil – a tradition and heritage which we must maintain in the face of today’s horrific conflicts in the Middle East and beyond. Draconian cuts to the international affairs budget as proposed by the Trump Administration will not make us safer, and in fact is a direct threat to our national security because of the vacuum in support and leadership such cuts create. As such, we urge you to provide strong funding in Fiscal Year 2019 to the critical agencies that support our national security interests and serve the world’s most vulnerable populations. Thank you for consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senate



TOM CARPER
United States Senate



CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senate



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United States Senate



JEFFREY A. MERKLEY
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TAMMY DUCKWORTH
United States Senate



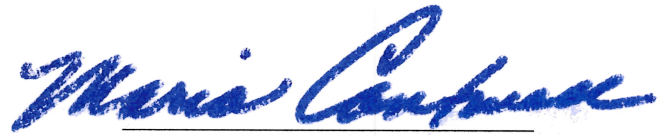
SHERROD BROWN
United States Senate



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senate



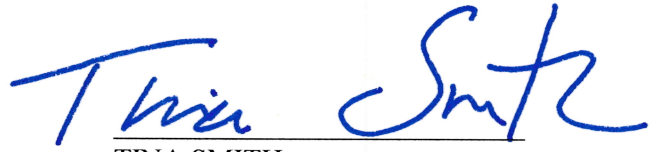
ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senate



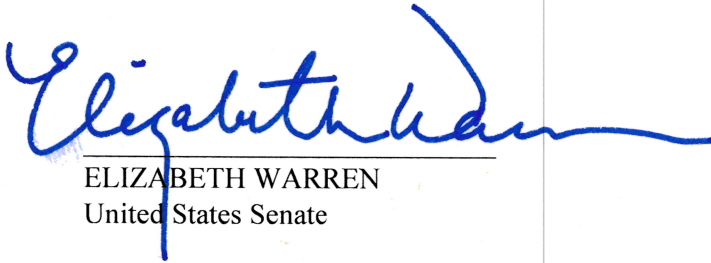
MARIA CANTWELL
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CORY A. BOOKER
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TAMMY BALDWIN
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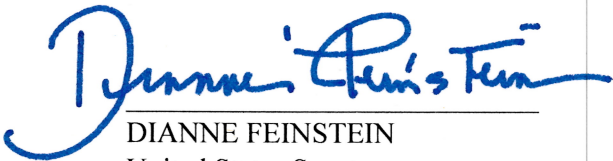
SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
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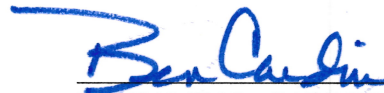
MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senate



TIM KAINE
United States Senate



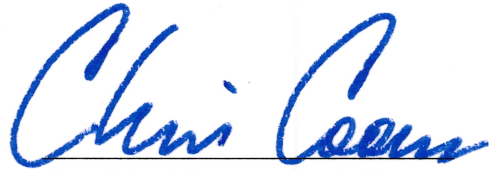
DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senate



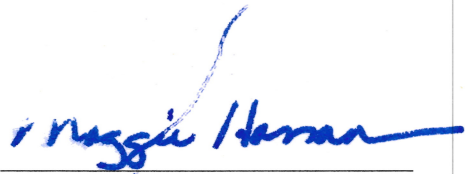
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senate



RON WYDEN
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CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senate



MARGARET WOOD HASSAN
United States Senate

CC: Chairman Lindsey Graham, Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs; Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.

Chairman Roy Blunt, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies; Ranking Member Patty Murray, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies.