

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree:

Nearly sixty years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America's most successful conservation program. This landmark law was designed to assure our growing population that outdoor recreation lands would be secured, on a pay-as-you-go basis, for future Americans' requirements. We are thrilled that the 116th Congress voted overwhelmingly to pass two major bills making LWCF permanent with the Dingell Act of 2019 and the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020. The two acts secured permanent reauthorization and full permanent funding, respectively, making a definitive statement in support of LWCF as a uniquely constructed, common-sense concept of dedicating the proceeds from public resource extraction for the protection of our greatest natural parks and outdoor places.

Now that Congress has resoundingly affirmed its commitment to LWCF as originally intended by protecting the program's annual \$900 million deposits for the long-term and ensuring the direction of those funds to their intended conservation and recreation purposes, we look forward to working on a bipartisan basis toward efficient implementation and strong continuing oversight of our nation's most important conservation and recreation program. GAOA reinforced the critical decision-making role of Congress in determining LWCF funding for its multiple authorized federal agency programs and state grant programs through the annual appropriations process. With passage of GAOA, Congress finally and permanently ended the history of underfunding, which has limited LWCF from the outset, and provided a solid floor for future investment in conservation and recreation. We particularly want to thank both Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree for your longstanding leadership in these efforts.

We greatly appreciate that the FY 2023 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies bill fully invests in LWCF and urge that in the FY 2024 bill you recognize the resounding level of support for LWCF and the backlog of compelling now-or-never conservation and recreation needs in communities across America by investing the increased resources needed to successfully implement this valuable, time-tested program. We thank the Subcommittee for its vital work in FY23 to produce a bill with strong project oversight and balanced allocations among LWCF subprograms according to the formula set down by the Dingell Act: at least 40% for federal agency conservation and recreation priorities (USFS, BLM, USFWS, NPS), at least 40% for the suite of LWCF state and local grant programs (State and Local Assistance Program, Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership program, Forest Legacy Program, American Battlefield Protection Program, Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Grants, and Highlands Grant Program), and the remaining 20% allocated among the suite of 10 programs based on need.

Importantly, by retaining unobligated, prior-year discretionary LWCF funds within appropriated programs rather than allowing them to be rescinded, the FY23 bill also recognizes that the programs under the LWCF umbrella are

oversubscribed and that full funding of LWCF has not eliminated the backlog of time-sensitive conservation and recreation priorities. We appreciate the Subcommittee's commitment to addressing unmet needs by keeping funds in place for viable funded projects within these accounts, and for reinvesting them in LWCF program needs through reprogramming in the event specified project needs have changed. Additionally, with demand continuing to outstrip available LWCF funding, we urge you to retain this approach in FY24.

Investments in LWCF support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for all Americans, in rural communities and cities alike. It has created outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and 98 percent of counties across the country, opening key areas for hunting, fishing, and other recreational access; supporting working forests and ranches; and acquiring inholdings and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields, and other federal areas.


LWCF is essential to America's outdoor recreation economy, which contributes \$862 billion to the nation's economy each year and supports 4.5 million American jobs (more than utilities or construction). Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

We look forward to working with you and other members of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies in the coming months to ensure that the suite of LWCF programs receive the high priority they need in FY24 to maintain our commitment to conservation and recreation, as well as to states and local communities. We urge you to provide balanced allocations for LWCF in FY24, retain unobligated funds with LWCF programs, and include the full project priority lists in the Subcommittee report accompanying the bill. As our nation continues to see rapid loss of natural areas to development, and unprecedented use of parks, trails and other outdoor spaces during the pandemic, the need for increased investment in equitable access to the outdoors, natural infrastructure, and resilient landscapes to support both people and wildlife has never been more urgent.

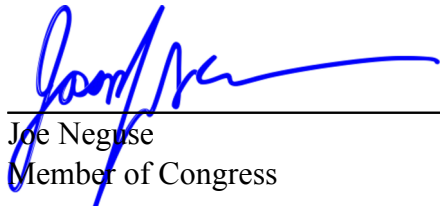
Sincerely,



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



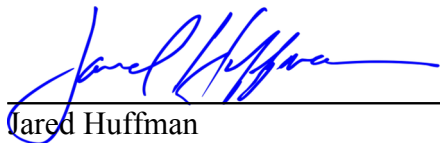
Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
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Michael R. Turner
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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James P. McGovern
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Michael V. Lawler
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Shontel M. Brown
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Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
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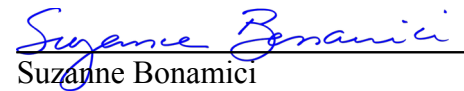
Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



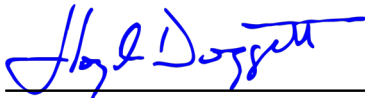
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



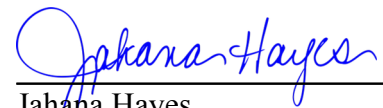
Stacey E. Plaskett
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Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



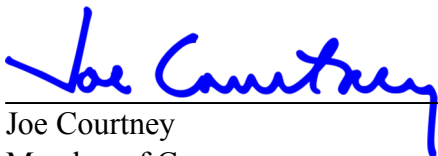
Jahana Hayes
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Bradley Scott Schneider
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Julia Brownley
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Joe Courtney
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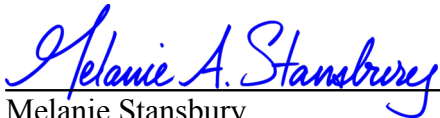
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
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Melanie Stansbury
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Chrissy Houlahan
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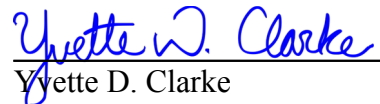
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



David Scott
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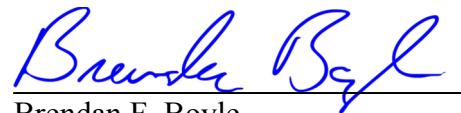
Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
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Jimmy Panetta
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Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



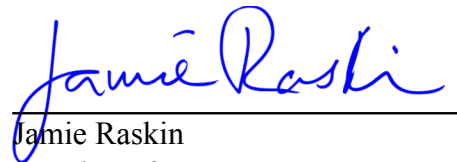
Angie Craig
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



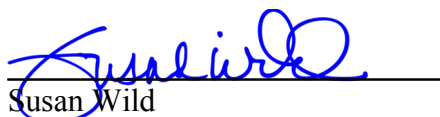
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



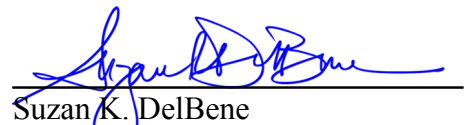
Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress
, Committee on Ways and Means



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



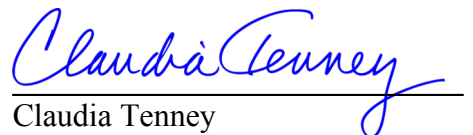
Susan Wild
Member of Congress



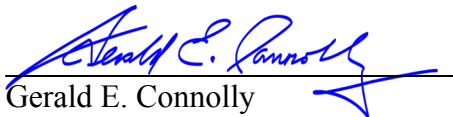
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



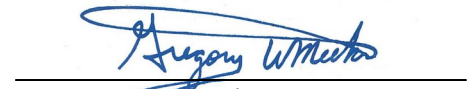
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress



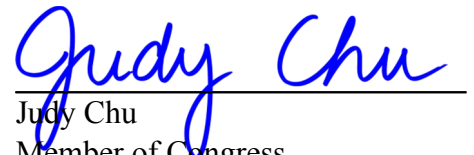
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress




Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



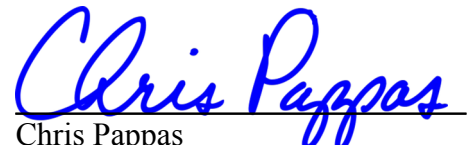
Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colón
Member of Congress




Judy Chu
Member of Congress




Grace F. Napolitano
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Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



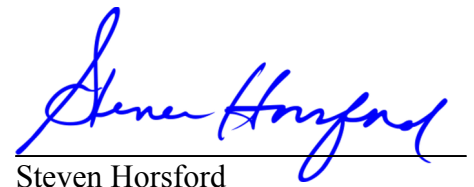
Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



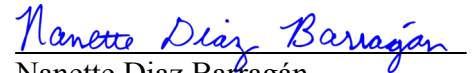
Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
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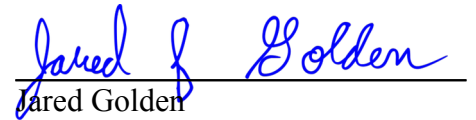
Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress



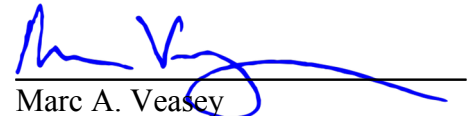
Mike Levin
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Jared Golden
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Andy Kim
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Marc A. Veasey
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Lizzie Fletcher
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Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



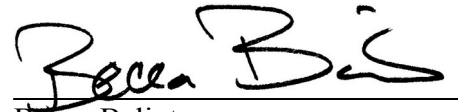
Mary Gay Scanlon
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Rick Larsen
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Bill Foster
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Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
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Patrick K. Ryan
Member of Congress



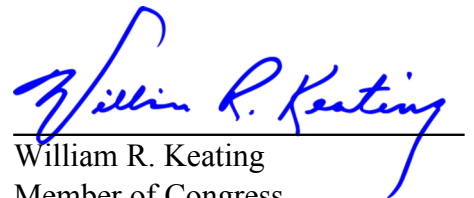
Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress



Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress



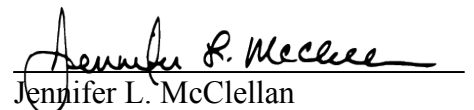
André Carson
Member of Congress



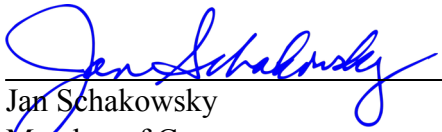
William R. Keating
Member of Congress




Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress




Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



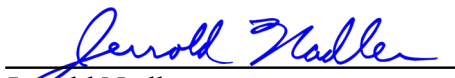
Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress




Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



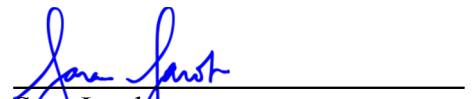
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



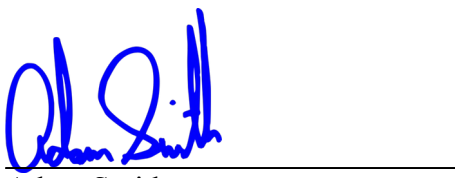
Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



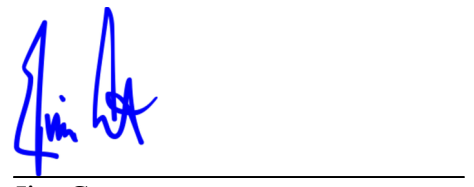
Lucy McBath
Member of Congress




Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress





Adam Smith
Member of Congress




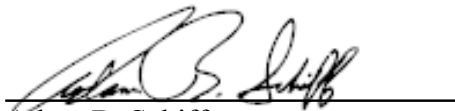
Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
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John P. Sarbanes
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Elise M. Stefanik
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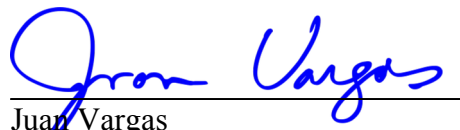

Troy Carter
Member of Congress

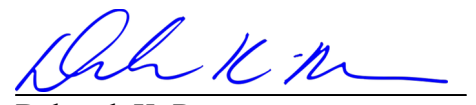

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress


Nikema Williams
Member of Congress


Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress

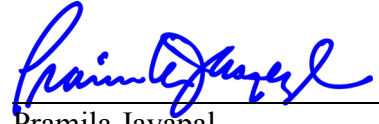

Brad Sherman
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Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

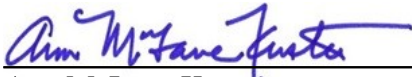

Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



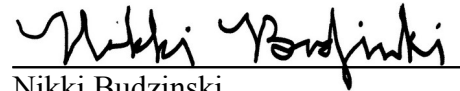
Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



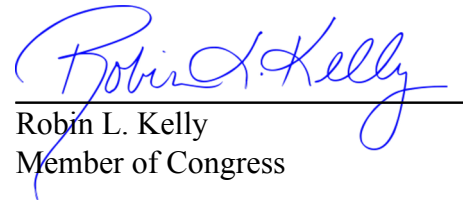
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Nikki Budzinski



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



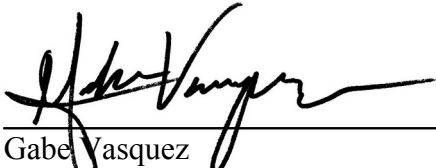
Katie Porter
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



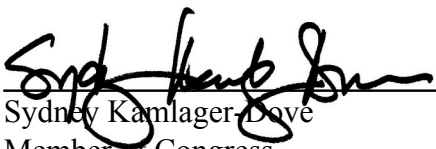
Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
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Nick LaLota
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress




Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



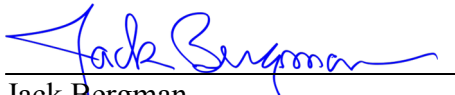
Dusty Johnson
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John Garamendi
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Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
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Morgan McGarvey
Member of Congress



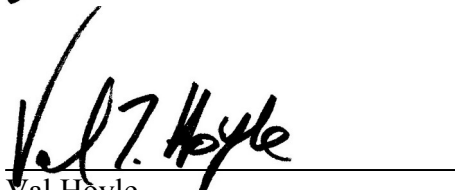
Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Jared Moskowitz
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Glenn Grothman
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Val Hoyle
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Paul D. Tonko
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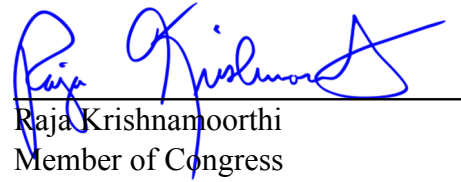
Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



Elissa Slotkin
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Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress




Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



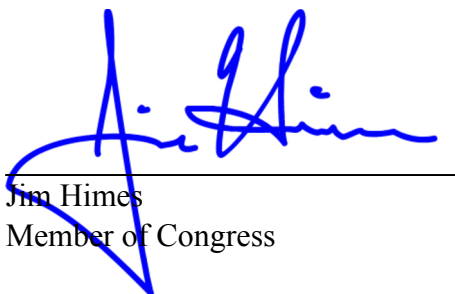
Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



Daniel Meuser
Member of Congress



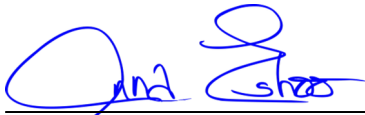
Salud Carbajal
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Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



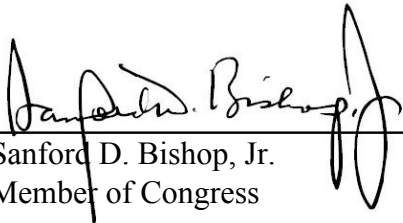
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



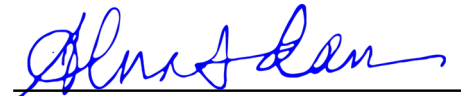
Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



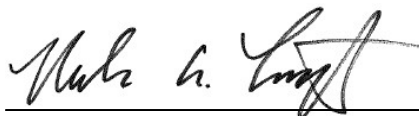
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Nicholas A. Langworthy
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Anthony D'Esposito
Member of Congress



Abigail Davis Spanberger
Member of Congress



Nancy Mace
Member of Congress



David Rouzer
Member of Congress



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress



Marcus J. Molinaro
Member of Congress




Jeff Jackson
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



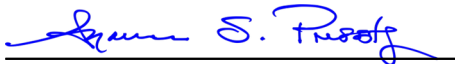
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



Hillary J. Scholten
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



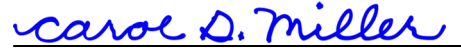
C. A. Dutch Ruppertsberger
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress



Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress




Mary Sattler Peltola
Member of Congress



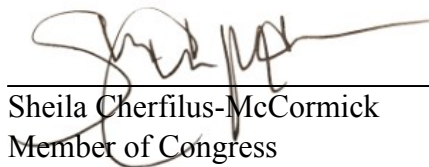
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Brandon Williams
Member of Congress



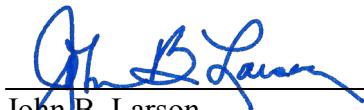
Jen A. Kiggans
Member of Congress



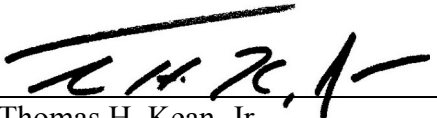
Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
Member of Congress
Ranking Members, Subcommittee
on Social Security



Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
Member of Congress