

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 29, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We are writing to urge you to publicly condemn the latest violence against the LGBT community in Chechnya and to utilize all measures of pressure available to you to force Russian leaders to stop this persecution.

According to the Russian LGBT Network and as reported by the *New York Times*, another wave of persecution has been undertaken against LGBT persons by government law enforcement in Chechnya since the end of December 2018. It is estimated that 40 people were detained and two were killed as a result of torture.

This is just the latest chapter in ongoing discrimination against LGBT persons in this Russian region, which started in 2017 when over 100 people suspected of being LGBT were detained. Reports indicate people were also tortured, including being beaten with batons and subjected to electric shocks, and killed; A survivor of these atrocities told the Human Rights Campaign in June 2018, "They beat us because we are gay.... They believe we are supposed to die and that we shouldn't be allowed to live. People like us shouldn't exist."

The international community appropriately responded with outrage at the reports of the atrocities occurring at the behest of Russian authorities, and we appreciate the Administration's use of Magnitsky sanctions and support for invoking the Moscow Mechanism of the OSCE in order to attempt to have an unbiased investigation into crimes against the LGBT community inside Russia. However, we fear that the new reports of violence only confirm Russia's complete unwillingness to take these crimes seriously and punish their perpetrators.

Russian leaders so far have demonstrated that they are unwilling, unable, or uninterested in stopping this oppression. In fact, in May 2018 an official with the Russian Justice Ministry went so far as to deny the existence of an LGBT community in Chechnya. This echoed the statement of a spokesperson for the president of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov. President Kadyrov at one pointed allegedly said that LGBT people in Chechnya should be removed to "cleanse our blood."

The U.S. is a beacon of hope and freedom for the world, as it stands up for the dignity and human rights of all people everywhere. This situation is no different. It is incumbent on you to

reaffirm these principles and publicly condemn violence against the LGBT community in Chechnya, and to utilize all of the tools available to you to pressure the Russian government into ending these atrocities.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

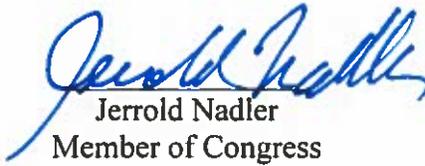
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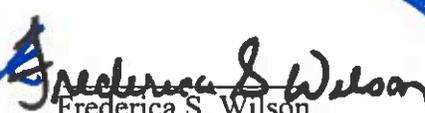
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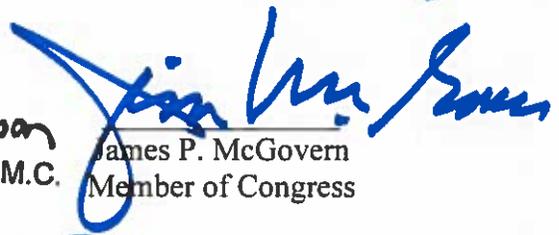
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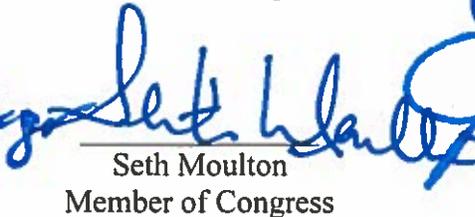
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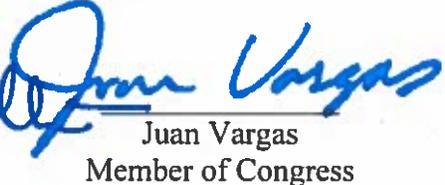
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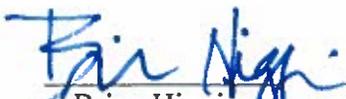


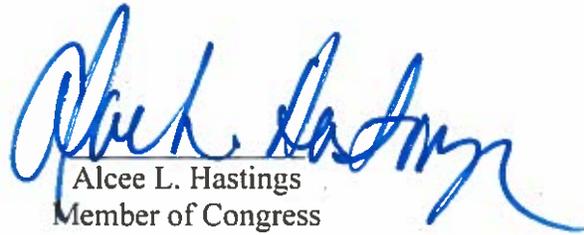
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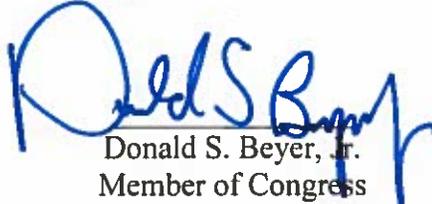
  
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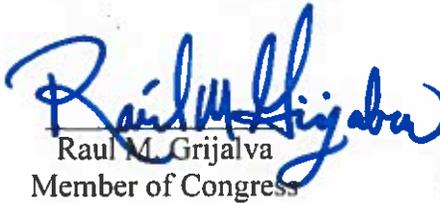
  
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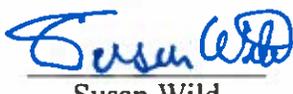
  
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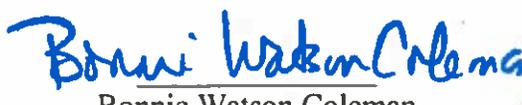
  
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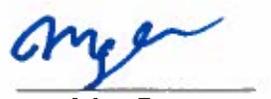
  
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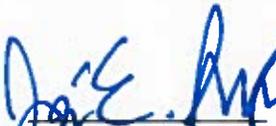
  
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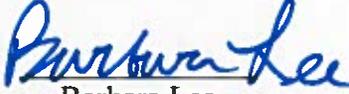
  
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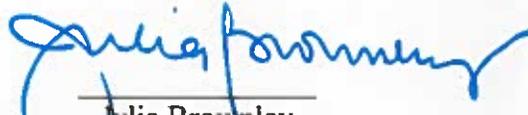
  
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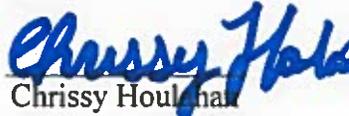
  
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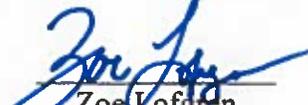
  
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