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DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0921

June 6, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

As the United States seeks to end the fighting in Afghanistan, we urge you to ensure that Afghan women are equally and meaningfully represented in the peace process and that any agreement protects women's rights. While we welcome the State Department's efforts to lay the foundation for an inclusive intra-Afghan peace process, we are concerned that women's voices are being excluded.

Research by the International Peace Institute shows that when women have a substantive role in peace negotiations, the likelihood the agreement will last beyond fifteen years increases by as much as 35 percent. Recognizing the importance of women's participation, Congress passed and President Trump signed into law the Women, Peace, and Security Act (PL 115-68). As you know, that law makes it U.S. policy to promote women's meaningful participation in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. It builds upon a growing body of research that demonstrates, in the words of the 2017 National Security Strategy, that "societies that empower women to participate fully in civic and economic life are more prosperous and peaceful." Additionally, the Presidential Memorandum on Promoting Women's Global Development and Prosperity rightfully recognizes this relationship between women's inequality and a country's propensity toward violent conflict. The Afghan peace process is the first real test of U.S. implementation of this law, and we hope you take this opportunity to include women as decision-makers on matters of peace and security.

The significant gains of Afghan women and girls over the past 18 years have been some of the greatest returns on U.S. investment in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban government fell in 2001, women have voted in elections and served as parliament members and government ministers. According to the U.S. Institute of Peace, more than 68,000 women are employed in schools and universities, at least 10,000 are doctors and health care professionals, and Afghan women entrepreneurs have created roughly 77,000 jobs for Afghans.

Women from across Afghanistan have come together in an unprecedented way to call for their equal and meaningful participation in any ceasefire and peace process. The Afghan Women

National Consensus for Peace, a network of women's groups that includes the Office of the First Lady of Afghanistan, women members of the High Peace Council, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and the Afghan Women's Network, recently convened groups of women in 34 provinces to discuss their priorities for the peace process. Yet during the February and May talks in Doha between American diplomats and the Taliban, Afghan women were not represented. Afghan women's voices need to be heard – not just on women's rights, but on the future of their country. We urge the State Department to protect Afghan women's negotiating position and hard-won gains in all discussions with the Taliban.

As negotiations with the Taliban continue, women's perspectives and the preservation of women's rights and human rights should be at the center of your efforts, including by ensuring that women have a meaningful seat at the table. Sustainable peace in the country and the region depends upon it.

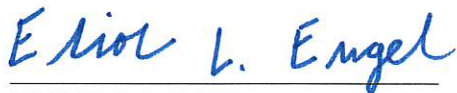
Sincerely,



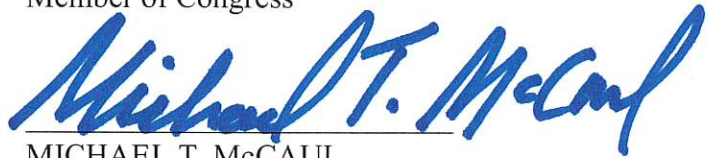
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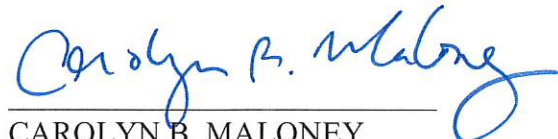
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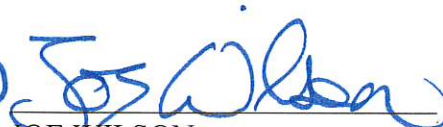


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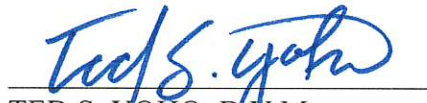

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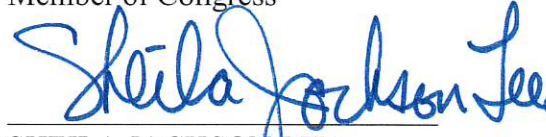

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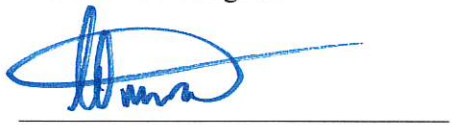

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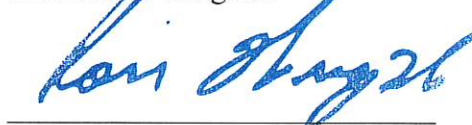

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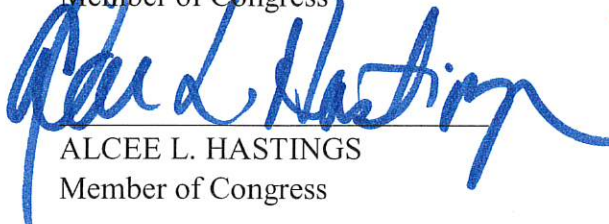
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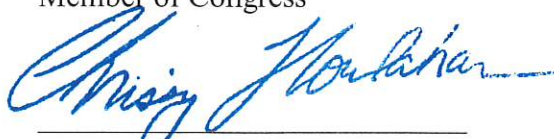
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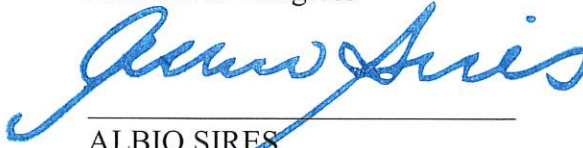
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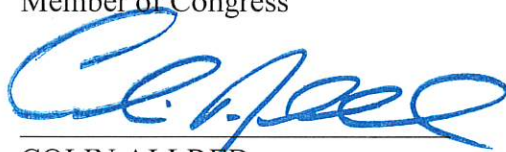
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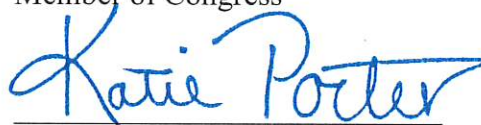
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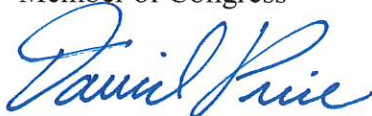
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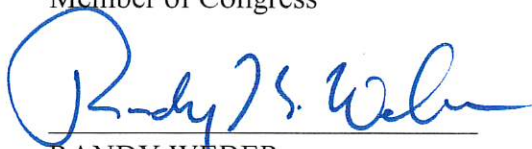
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