

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 21, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write in strong opposition to your decision to cut some \$200 million in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Economic Support Fund assistance originally planned for the West Bank and Gaza and to end U.S. contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), including more than \$300 million in assistance this fiscal year. Eliminating funds for programs that provide clean water, food, education, and medical services for Palestinians will exacerbate poverty, fuel extremism, further reduce the chance of a future peace agreement and threaten Israel's security. Both the FY17 and FY18 funds were approved by the Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support—a recognition among Republicans and Democrats alike that these programs are in the U.S. national interest. We urge you to reverse course and obligate these funds as Congress originally intended.

By law, U.S. foreign assistance cannot be directed to the Palestinian Authority or Hamas. Instead, Congress has appropriated funds to provide assistance directly to the Palestinian people, including millions of children in the Palestinian territories. The cuts you have proposed would make a desperate situation even worse.

Specifically, according to the organizations implementing USAID-funded programs in the West Bank and Gaza, these cuts will prevent:

- nearly 140,000 individuals from receiving emergency food aid;
- 3,000 children and their caregivers from receiving healthcare for anemia and malnutrition;
- up to 71,000 individuals from receiving access to clean water;
- 800 children from receiving rehabilitation services for cerebral palsy; and,
- 16,000 women from receiving clinical breast cancer treatment.

In addition, your decision to end U.S. contributions to UNRWA puts at risk:

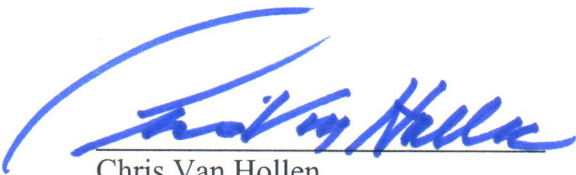
- civilian, secular education for 525,000 kids, 50 percent of which are girls, in more than 700 schools;
- food assistance to one million residents in Gaza, half of its population; and,
- public health in the refugee population, where UNRWA has long achieved a 100 percent vaccination rate.

We are deeply concerned that your strategy of attempting to force the Palestinian Authority to the negotiating table by withholding humanitarian assistance from women and children is

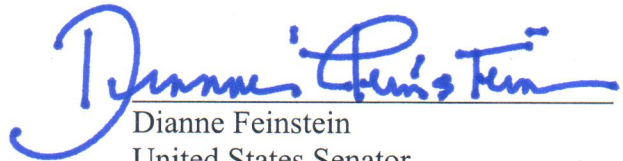
misguided and destined to backfire. Your proposed cuts would undermine those who seek a peaceful resolution and strengthen the hands of Hamas and other extremists in the Gaza Strip, as the humanitarian crisis there worsens.

For these reasons, we strongly believe it is in the national security interest of the United States, our ally Israel, the Palestinian people, and our other partners and allies in the region to expeditiously obligate the FY17 Economic Support Fund assistance originally planned for the West Bank and Gaza and to sustain U.S. contributions to UNRWA. We urge you to reverse your decision and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



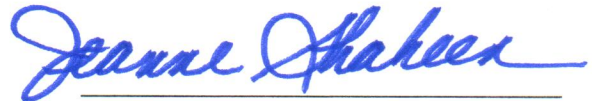
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



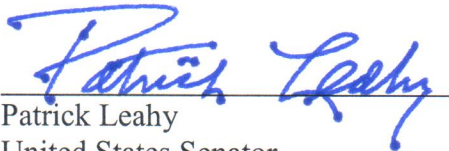
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



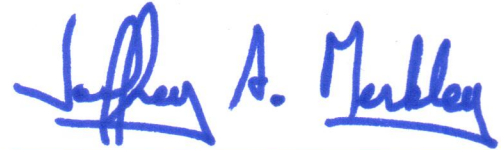
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



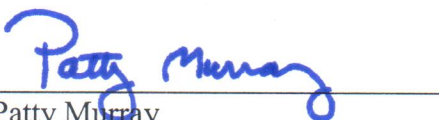
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



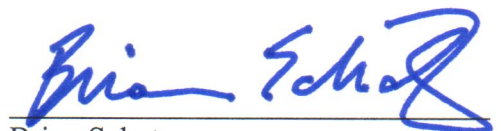
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



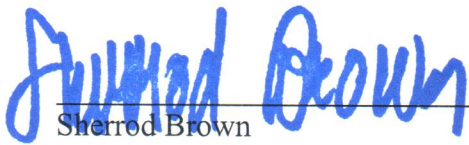
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



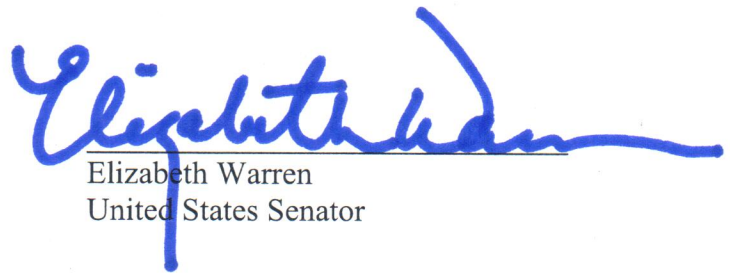
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



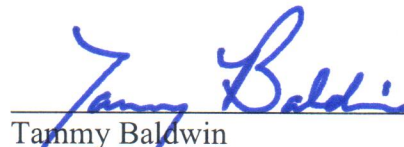
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



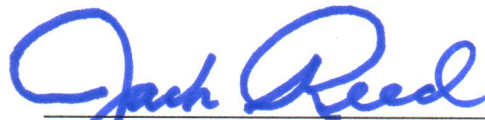
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



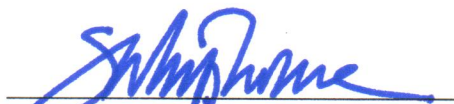
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



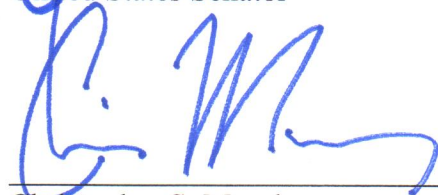
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



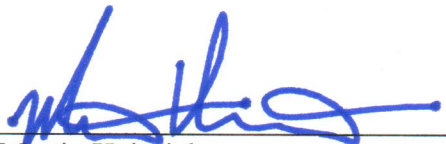
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



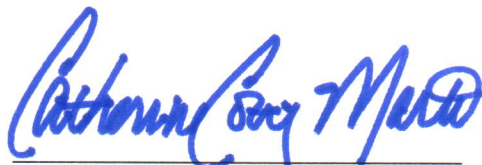
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



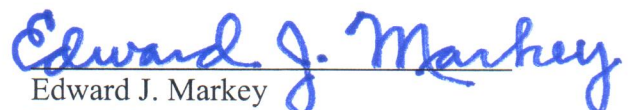
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



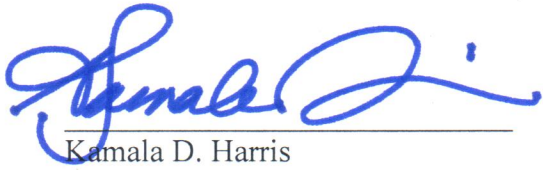
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



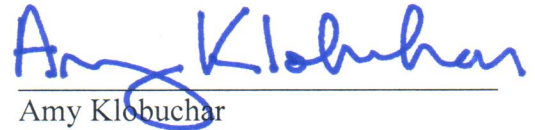
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



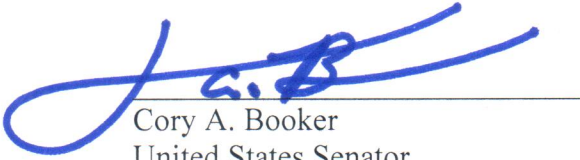
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



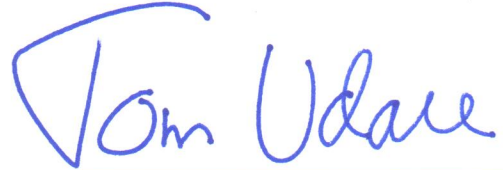
Tina Smith
United States Senator



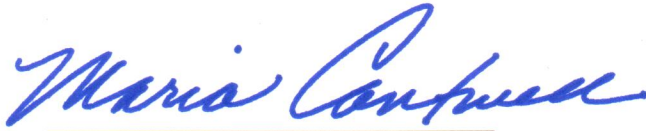
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



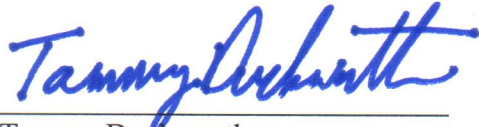
Tom Udall
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



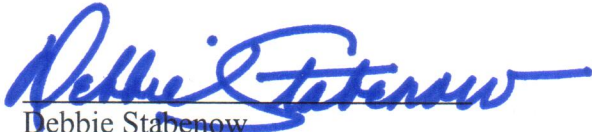
Maggie Hassan
United States Senator



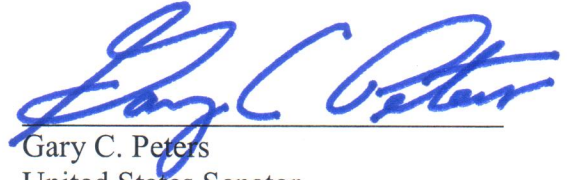
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator