

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
US Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to bring your attention to a serious and chronic problem in Guatemala—child sexual assault. As the Guatemalan government works to improve its response to this heinous crime, we urge you to ensure that the United States prioritizes efforts to address child sexual assault—particularly capacity building for the Guatemalan police—in its assistance to Guatemala.

Tragically, the crime of sexual assault is all too common in Guatemala. According to Human Rights Watch, “rapes and sexual assaults of women increased by 34 percent from 2008 to 2011, while in 9 of every 10 of these cases, those responsible are not punished.”

The prevalence of child sexual assault is especially troubling. A report by Doctors Without Borders in 2012 found that a quarter of all adolescent women and girls in Guatemala reported they had been a victim of sexual violence within the past year.

In the past, victims of sexual assault in Guatemala did not have adequate support, and police and prosecutors lacked both the will and the technical ability to confront this crime consistently and appropriately. However, recent efforts by the Guatemalan government—including reforming its police and enacting many of the recommendations of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)—demonstrate an increased commitment to address sexual violence.

We were particularly encouraged by the Guatemalan government’s decision in 2012 to designate a Special Unit for Sex Crimes within the Special Division for Criminal Investigation (DEIC) to investigate cases of sexual assault. Unfortunately, the unit currently lacks the capacity to successfully combat the plague of child sexual assault. According to a baseline study conducted by the non-profit organization International Justice Mission (IJM), fewer than 6 percent of child sexual assault cases in Guatemala reach a verdict. The majority of these cases stalled in the investigations stage.

As such, we urge you to ensure that U.S. assistance to Guatemala includes adequate resources to improve the Special Unit for Sex Crimes within the DEIC. We believe that with additional capacity and training, this unit could conduct prompt and professional investigations, coordinate effectively with prosecutors, and successfully locate and apprehend perpetrators of child sexual assault.

The Guatemalan government has made important progress in its efforts to combat child sexual assault and the United States can be an important partner as Guatemala works to make the country safer for women and girls.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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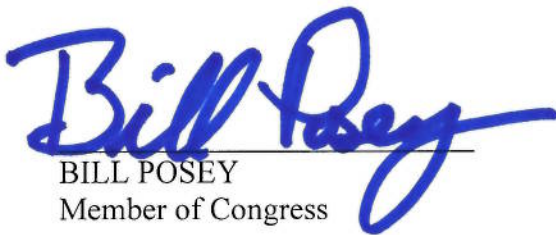
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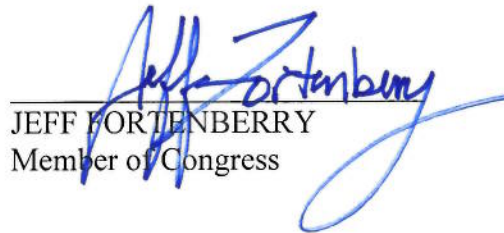

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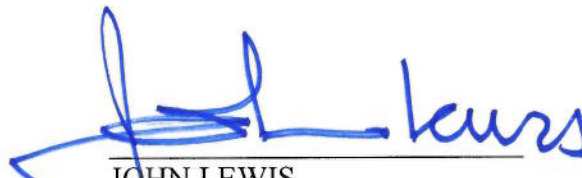

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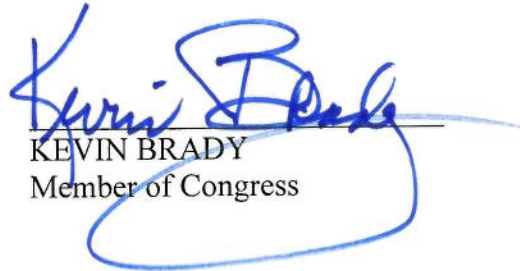
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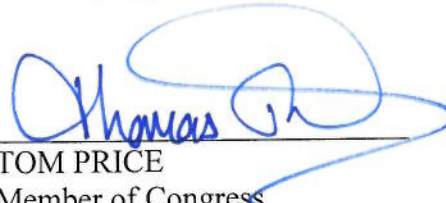
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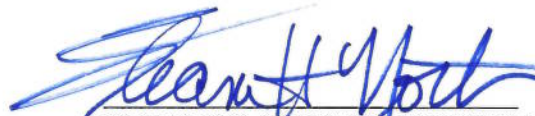


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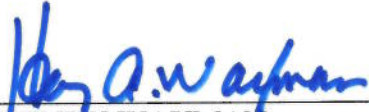

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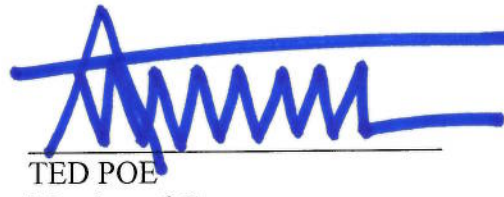
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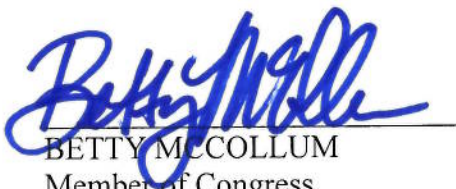
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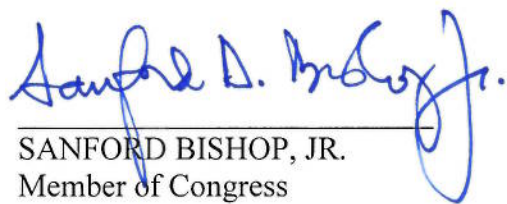
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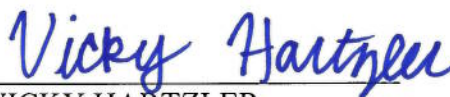
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