



**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives**

December 11, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid:

We write to urge you to carefully consider concerns with H.R. 158, the Visa Waiver Program Improvement Act of 2015, as you begin your deliberation of this bill in the Senate and consider its possible inclusion in omnibus appropriations legislation.

We all agree that the first responsibility of government is to keep the American people safe, and the American people are rightfully concerned about the threat of terrorism. This is why we are pleased that Congress and the Administration have been examining changes to the Visa Waiver Program to ensure that any vulnerabilities that could put the American people at risk are addressed.

Requiring all travelers under the Visa Waiver Program to have an unexpired, fraud-resistant electronic passport is an important security measure to take. We also support new requirements for Interpol screening of travelers and reporting on theft of passports. These provisions are included in H.R. 158 and would help improve our security here at home, should the bill be enacted into law.

However, we should be very cautious regarding bills that have not had the full benefit of committee hearings or markups. As we saw when the House passed H.R. 4038, the American SAFE Act of 2015, a number of unintended consequences came to light after the bill had already passed the House.

Making sure that we avoid as many unintended consequences as possible is particularly important when we are proposing to disqualify specific populations of people from long standing immigration practices.

As written, H.R. 158 would result in discrimination against people simply because they are dual citizens based on ancestry. These changes could result in our Visa Waiver Program partner nations placing new limits on travel by U.S. citizens to their countries. Fundamentally, people seeking entry into our country should be evaluated based on the specific security risk that they themselves pose – not where their parents are from. Additionally, the bill would bar certain humanitarian workers from traveling under the Visa Waiver Program, and thus could result in less assistance reaching

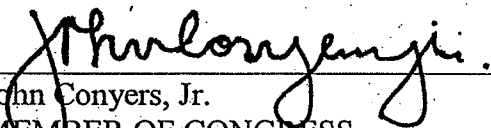
some of the most vulnerable individuals in the world. The bill also fails to include a sunset provision for the new visa waiver procedures, denying Congress the opportunity to reevaluate their efficacies and determine if additional changes are needed.

As we move forward on this issue, we hope that you will consider three possible changes to the House-passed version of H.R. 158:


- Provisions that discriminate based on dual citizenship based solely on ancestry should be eliminated.
- Exceptions are needed from the bars on visa waiver travel for those who have spent time in Syria, Iraq, and other designated countries to provide medical or humanitarian aid or as journalists or researchers.
- Changes to the visa waiver program should require reauthorization after a specified period of time.

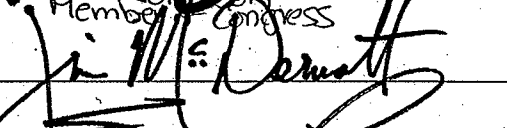
We look forward to working together to keep the American people safe and to ensure that these concerns, and others that may come to light in the coming days, are adequately addressed.

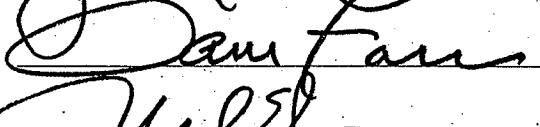
Sincerely,

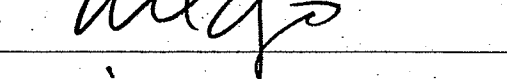

John Conyers, Jr.
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Debbie Dingell
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Frank Lucas
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

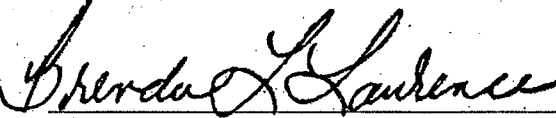

Jim McInerney

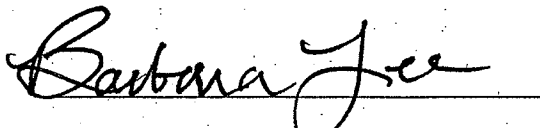

Sam Farr

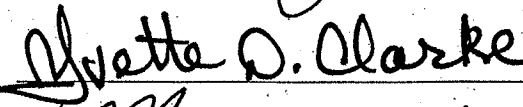

Mark Amodeo



Bill Pascrell

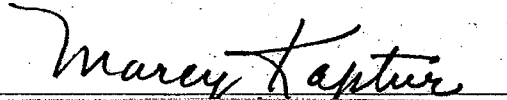

Dan Kildee
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

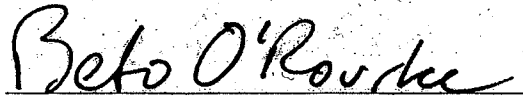

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