

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker and Madam Leader:

We write in support of Brand USA, a public-private partnership established by Congress to promote and market the United States as a destination for international travelers. For 6 years Brand USA has worked with local communities across the country to attract millions of international visitors, and the billions of dollars they spend here in the United States. Despite its success, Brand USA's future was recently and inadvertently put at risk. We respectfully urge you to work with us to identify a legislative solution this year that will support re-authorization and funding for this important program.

There has been very strong, broad bipartisan support of Brand USA because of the positive economic impact it creates across the United States. Working with 800 partners, Brand USA's efforts have brought 5.4 million incremental international visitors to the United States since fiscal year 2013. During this timeframe, Brand USA generated \$17.7 billion in visitor spending and \$5 billion in tax revenue, supporting an average of 51,000 jobs. The *Travel Promotion Act of 2009*, which created Brand USA, passed the Senate 79-19 and was approved by the House of Representatives by a unanimous voice vote. The 2014 bill reauthorizing Brand USA passed the House 347-57 and was approved as part of a broader bill in the Senate.

Under both original enactment and reauthorization, Brand USA was funded by a portion of a small ESTA fee assessed on international visitors to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program, and then matched by private sector funds 1:1. Brand USA receives NO federal taxpayer funds. However, a provision of the 2018 congressional budget caps agreement diverted this fee revenue to other uses. We recognize that this change was not intended to harm Brand USA, but the resulting uncertainty leaves the progress and planning of tourism promotion strategies for scores of communities throughout the nation, small and large, rural and urban, in jeopardy.

From a national policy perspective, the need to market America globally has never been more important. While travel is up throughout the world as much as 8-10%, for the first time in a decade, we are seeing a decline in the United States' share of global travel. Countries like France, China, and Spain are outpacing America's growth. Brand USA is the only entity focused solely on marketing all of the United States internationally and can help the U.S. regain billions of dollars in visitor spending that comes with international travel. Quite frankly, we need Brand USA now more than ever.

We respectfully and urgently request that you work with us this year to ensure a reliable funding source is available to Brand USA and that the program is reauthorized so it can continue to attract international visitors, and the revenue they generate with each trip to the United States.

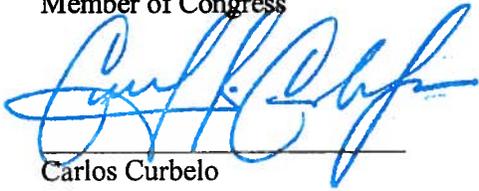
Sincerely,



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



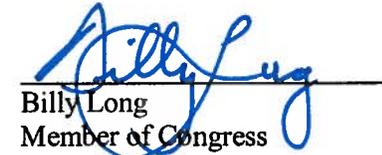
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Billy Long
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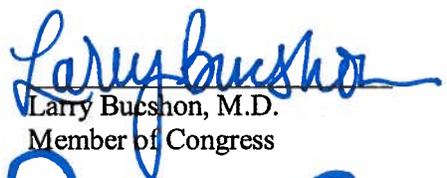
Grace Meng
Member of Congress


David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress

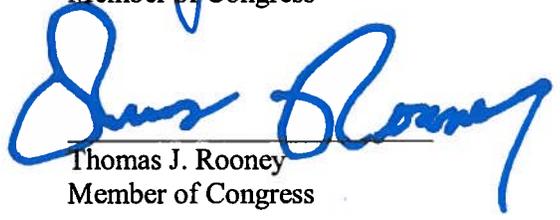

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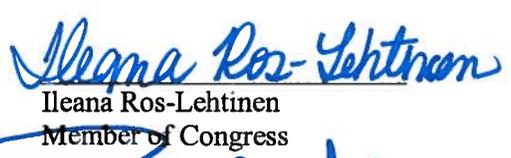

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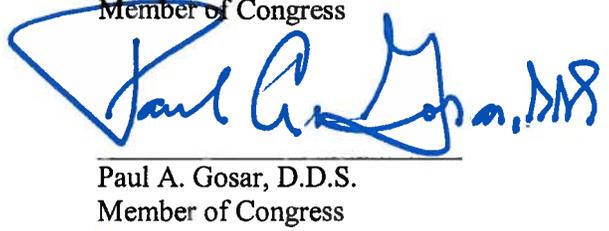

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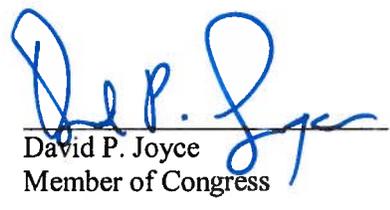

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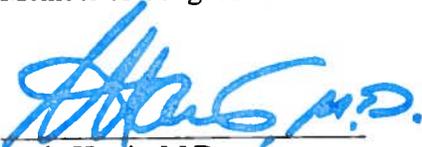
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Member of Congress



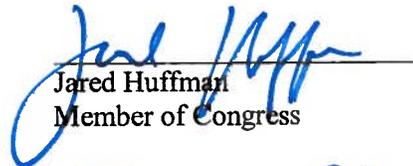
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Andy Harris, M.D.
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Jared Huffman
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Jenniffer González-Colon
Member of Congress



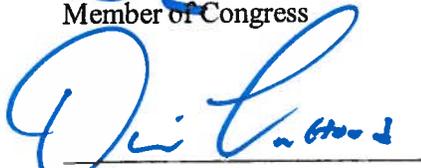
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