

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2017

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair
State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee
HB-26, Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee
2365 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

We thank the Subcommittee for its support for programs that promote people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation around the world, particularly in the Middle East, and urge you to again provide \$10 million in funding focused exclusively on people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation projects in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We all hope that Israeli and Palestinian leaders will reach genuine, mutually-supported success when they restart bilateral negotiations. While agreeing to high-level deals can only be achieved by talks and negotiations between representative political leaders, sustaining any future agreements will be more effectively achieved through the strong support and buy-in of everyday people. As part of the effort to sustain future agreements, combat terrorism, and reduce violence, Congress has a strong tradition of appropriating funds for Middle East coexistence programs that help bring people together at the grassroots level for reconciliation activities.

These programs have a record of success in bringing together ordinary Israelis and Palestinians in working jointly on educational programs, business cooperation, sports activities, community development, and inter-religious dialogue. Through local organizations, these funds serve to engage thousands on the ground to cooperate in projects, break down barriers and stereotypes, diminish the appeal of terrorism, and change attitudes, while building trust and a foundation for sustainable change. Additionally, reconciliation efforts help reduce violence on the ground and provide an antidote to anti-U.S. propaganda.

In short, these programs work in creating greater trust, enhanced cooperation, increased “conflict resolution values”, decreased aggression and loneliness, and mitigation of hazardous conditions between and amongst project participants from opposing sides of the conflict. Equally important, these projects give those who seek to address their differences peacefully tangible ways to reject terrorism, incitement, and violence and work toward a better tomorrow.

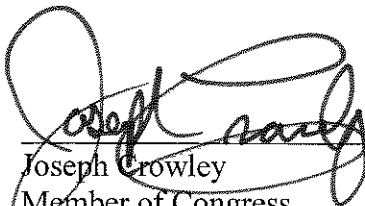
Below are just three examples of impact that some recent grantees of this program have created:

- Through two phases of the USAID/CMM-funded Olive Oil Without Borders (OOWB) project, NEF pioneered a model of peacebuilding through economic cooperation and has worked with more than 3,400 Palestinian and Israeli farmers, mill owners, and industry leaders to improve olive oil productivity and industry competitiveness. This initiative included facilitating the creation of the first joint policy commission of the Israeli and Palestinian Olive Oil Councils and the negotiation of a trade agreement in February 2013. A third phase of OOWB, launched in January 2017, expands activities to include Jordan.
- Kids4Peace is working in partnership with USAID in building a representative, interfaith community of Israeli and Palestinian youth and parents who visibly embody and effectively advocate for peace in Jerusalem. The project has four components – workshops for parents, youth advocacy training, public interfaith events, and the Pathways to Peace program. Through Pathways to Peace, 288 new youth in sixth and seventh grade will join Kids4Peace’s six-year, year-round program. This will connect a critical mass of Israeli and Palestinian youth from key neighborhoods and demographic groups in order to build grassroots support for peace. Kids4Peace is targeting recruitment on those populations normally absent from peace initiatives – including neighborhoods most prone to violence.
- Since 2005, PeacePlayers International – Middle East (PPI – ME) has run year-round integrated basketball programs for Palestinian and Israeli youth, reaching 7,000 youth and 500 young adults. In partnership with USAID, PPI – ME has successfully facilitated structural change, including the creation of Israel’s first-ever bilingual (Arabic and Hebrew) coaching and conflict resolution training program; winning the national 2014 Under-18 Championship with a joint Arab and Jewish team; a randomized control trial study, which has initially revealed that 96% of veteran PPI participants hold positive attitudes about the “other side.”

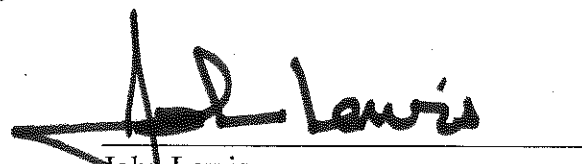
These represent just a fraction of the impact that these and other grantees have achieved through this grant program, and we urge your ongoing support.

Thank you for your consideration.

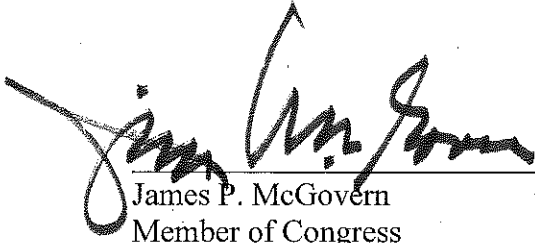
Sincerely,

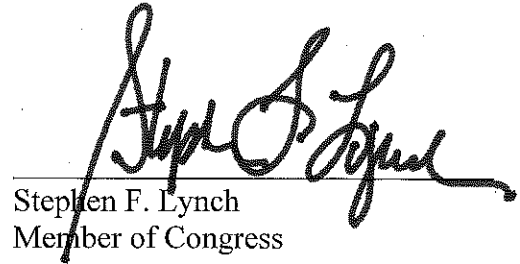


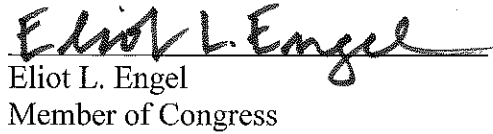
Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

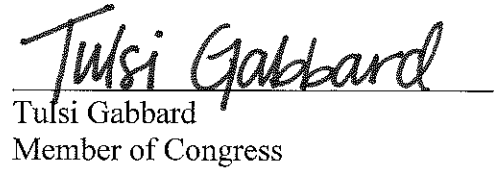


John Lewis
Member of Congress

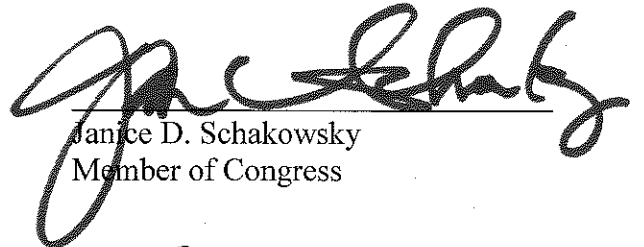

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

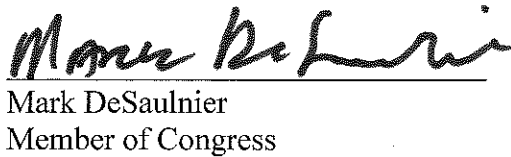

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

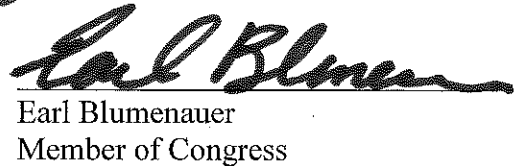

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress


Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

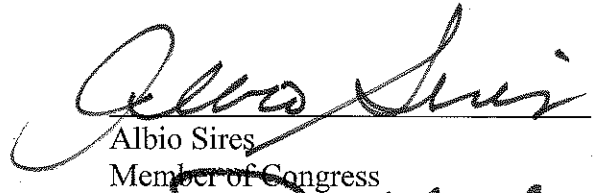

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

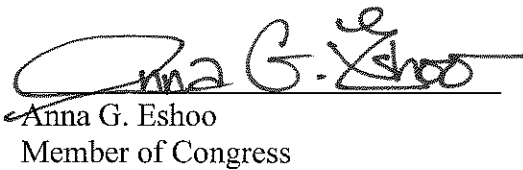

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress

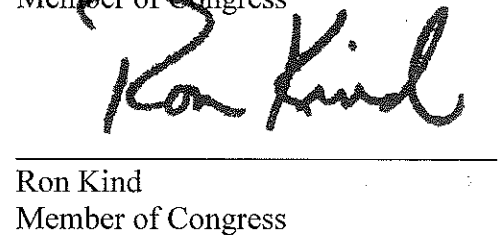

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

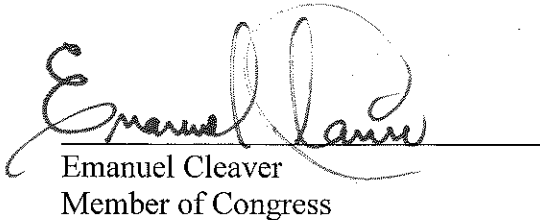

Earl Blumenauer
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Alan S. Lowenthal
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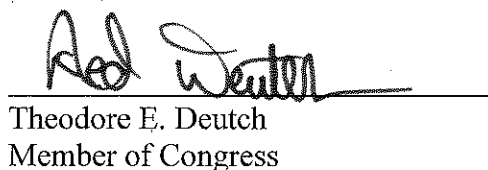

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

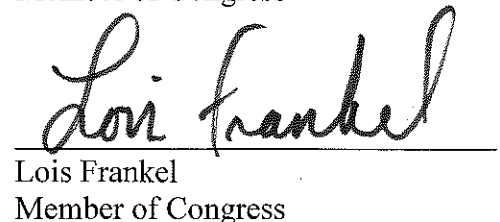

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

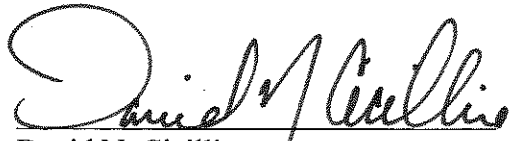

Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

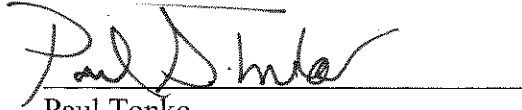

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

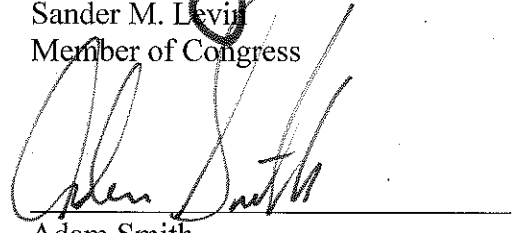

Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress

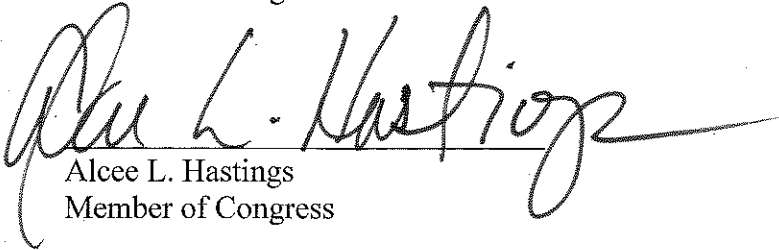

Lois Frankel
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