

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2015

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair

U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
HT2, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member

U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey:

We thank the Subcommittee for its long-term commitment to programs that promote people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation around the world, particularly in the Middle East.

We all hope that Israeli and Palestinian leaders will reach genuine, mutually-supported success when they restart negotiations. While reaching a high-level agreement will only be achieved by bilateral negotiations between political leaders, sustaining any future agreements will be more effectively achieved through the strong support and buy-in of impacted communities and peoples.

As part of the effort to sustain future agreements and combat terrorism, Congress appropriates funds for Middle East coexistence that help bring people together at the grassroots level to increase understanding and reduce violence. The coexistence and reconciliation activities supported by this program lay the groundwork for a sustained peace at the grassroots level.

These programs will also help enable the success of any diplomatic solution. They 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 peace. Additionally, reconciliation efforts help reduce violence on the ground and provide an antidote to anti-U.S. propaganda.

These programs work, 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 and violence and work toward a better tomorrow.

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

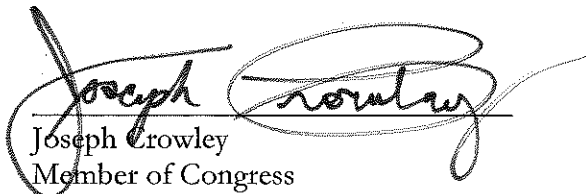
- The Abraham Fund Initiatives (TAFI)'s Ya Salam Arabic language and culture instruction program began by training and placing Arab teachers in a handful of Israeli Jewish schools in 2008. After initial successes, the program was adopted in 2011 by the Ministry of Education's Haifa and North regional school districts, expanding tenfold in less than five years - it is now implemented in 25% of the secular Hebrew public elementary schools around the country, reaching more than 23,000 students in a year.
- The Good Water Neighbors program has expanded from 11 to 28 Israeli and Palestinian partnering communities, as well as 8 neighboring communities in Jordan. These partnerships have resulted in the establishment of multiple waste water treatment plants, sewage and clean water access systems, and other facilities.
- Hand in Hand has grown to a network of schools in five cities and towns with demand for more, and through support, built thriving community programs around each school - the resilience of their community-building efforts clearly illustrated by their series of joint Arab-Jewish activities. The Jerusalem school received an outpouring of Jewish and Arab support in the wake of "price tag" vandalism this fall.

These represent just a fraction of the impact that these and other grantees have created through this grant program.

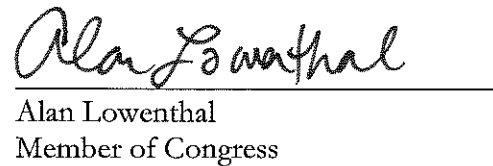
To support this work, we urge the Subcommittee to provide \$10 million in funding focused exclusively on people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation projects in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Thank you for your consideration.

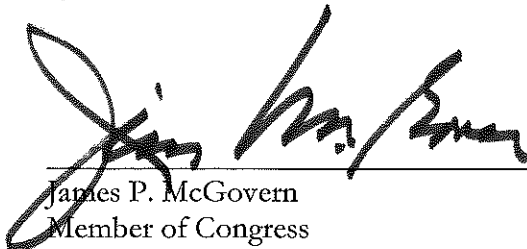
Sincerely,



Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



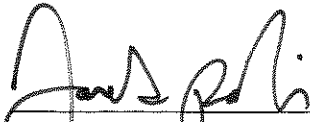
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress




James P. McGovern
Member of Congress




Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress

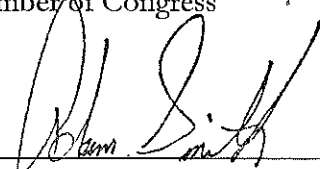

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

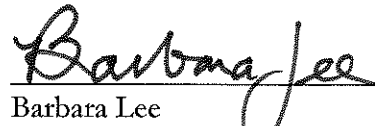

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

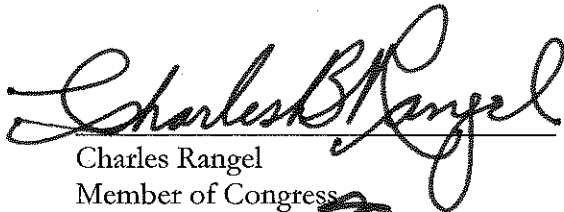

Lois Capps
Member of Congress


David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

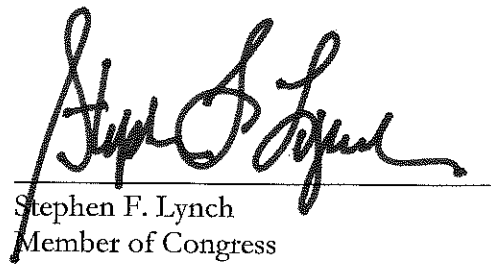

Charles Rangel
Member of Congress

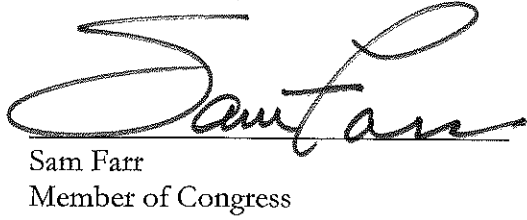

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress


Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

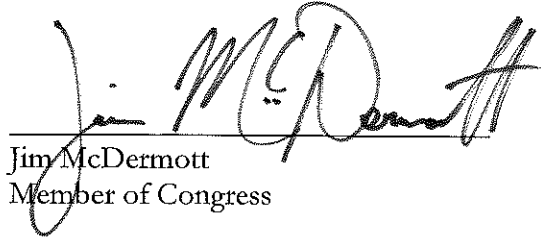

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

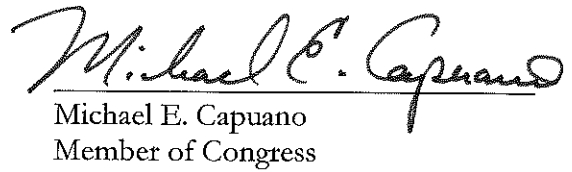

Elizabeth H. Etsy
Member of Congress

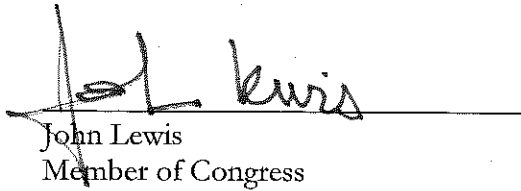

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

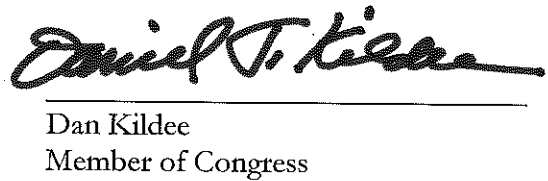

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

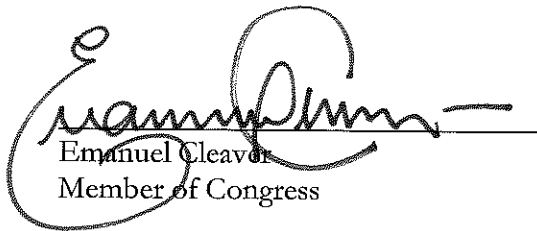

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress


Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

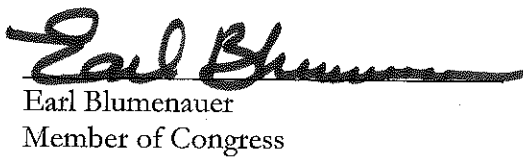

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress


John Lewis
Member of Congress

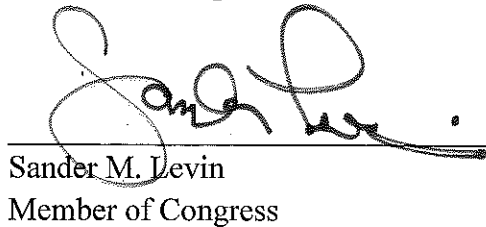

Dan Kildee
Member of Congress


Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress


Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress


Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress


Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress