

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2016

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 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 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 appropriates funds for Middle East coexistence that help bring people together at the grassroots level for coexistence and reconciliation activities.

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.

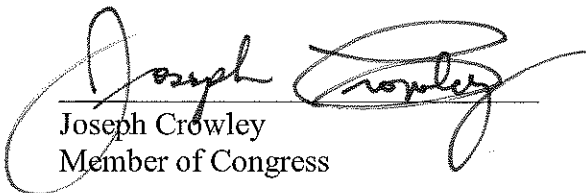
These programs work, creating greater trust, enhanced cooperation, increased “conflict resolution values”, decreased aggression and loneliness, and mitigation of hazardous conditions between and amongst project participants from opposing sides of the conflict. Equally important, these projects give those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


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

- Since 2011, programs have brought together hundreds of Palestinian and Israeli olive producers, millers, traders and others to help strengthen the sector by upgrading production, quality, and marketing through the Olive Oil Without Borders (OOWB) project. The effort has worked with 3,400 people from 58 communities in the West Bank and Israel to (1) expand economic cooperation among farmers, mill owners and distributors and (2) build working relationships between business, policy, and academic leaders through cross-border workshops and joint initiatives. Through OOWB, NEF helped establish the first-ever joint policy commission between the Palestinian and Israeli Olive Oil Councils. In 2013, the effort expanded its economic cooperation work in the West Bank to enable young Palestinians and Israelis to start cross-border businesses together in several additional agricultural subsectors. Twenty joint businesses have launched and another 10 will launch in the coming weeks.
- Another project has placed Arab citizens of Israel in hi-tech positions, and 185 college and university students participated in industry exposure workshops, gaining first-hand knowledge of hi-tech trends and hiring processes from industry leaders. Further, 325 Jewish and Arab hi-tech professionals came together in 11 monthly meetups, forming a committed community that bridges divides.
- Since 2005, another project has run year-round integrated basketball programs for Palestinian and Israeli youth, reaching 7,000 youth and 500 young adults. The effort has successfully facilitated structural change, including the creation of Israel's first-ever bilingual (Arabic and Hebrew) coaching and conflict resolution training program. And, research has shown that 96% of veteran participants hold positive attitudes about the "other side."
- Another project educates and empowers the next generation of young Israelis and Palestinians to become a network of leaders creating together positive change through technology and entrepreneurship. Since 2004, the program has implemented a 3-year curriculum of computer science, entrepreneurship and "deeper understanding" of conflict transformation elements, leading to an active network of almost 400 alumni and trainees. Another program, a cohort of some 70 young, excelling Israeli and Palestinian 15-16 year olds began their training in October 2015.

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.


Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress


Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Jared Polis

Jared Polis
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Ron Kind

Ron Kind
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Member of Congress

Elizabeth H. Esty

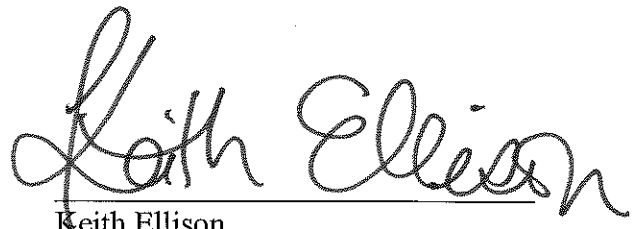
Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch

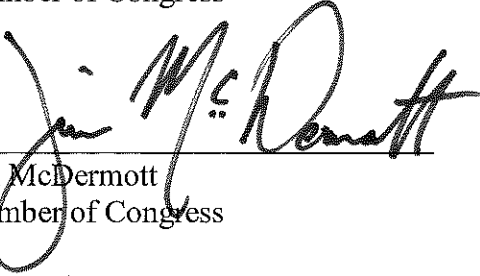
Stephen F. Lynch
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Sam Farr
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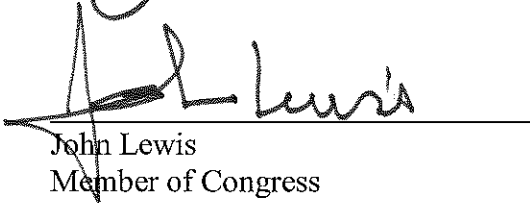
Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



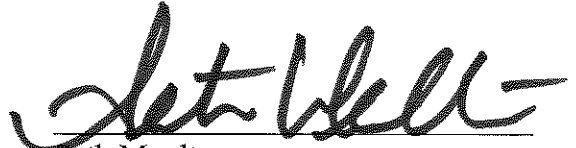
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



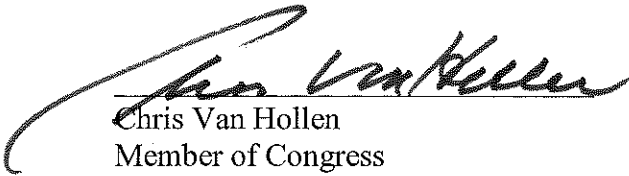
Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



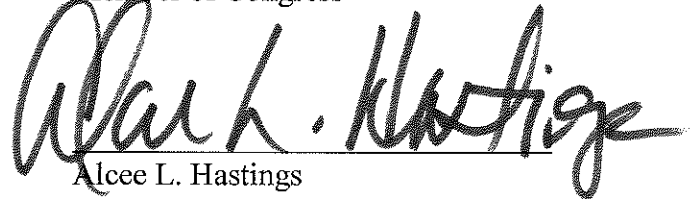
John Lewis
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Seth Moulton
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Chris Van Hollen
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Alcee L. Hastings
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Earl Blumenauer
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



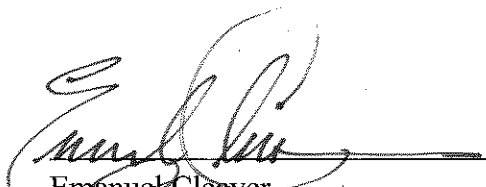
Sander M. Levin
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Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



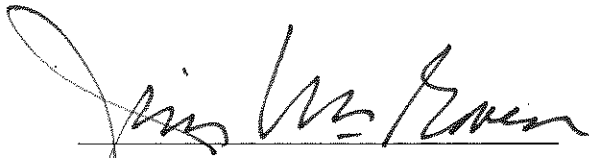
Frederica S. Wilson
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Emanuel Cleaver
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Dan Kildee
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James P. McGovern
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