

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 18, 2016

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you approach the final months of your term in office, we would first like to commend you on the strides your administration has made in combatting the dangers that tobacco and nicotine products pose to children. With those accomplishments in mind, we ask that you take immediate action to amend existing rules which allow children under the age of 18 to do dangerous work on tobacco farms. The hazards to children associated with this type of labor make closing this loophole essential.

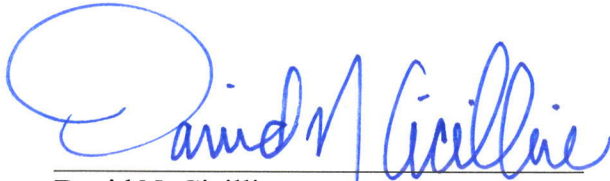
Current U.S. law allows children as young as 12, or even younger, to work as hired laborers in agriculture, and there is no special provision in law or regulation which accounts for the unique risks to children who work in tobacco fields. According to detailed reports published by Human Rights Watch in 2014 and 2015, children allowed to work on tobacco farms often work excruciatingly long hours in harsh conditions, and often without protective gear. They routinely handle tobacco plants containing nicotine, and many of these children experience symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and dizziness- which are consistent with acute nicotine poisoning, an occupational illness that occurs when workers absorb nicotine through their skin. The long-term impacts on children are unknown, but research on smoking suggests nicotine exposure during childhood and adolescence may have lasting consequences on brain development.

Because of this, it is critical that the Department of Labor issue a new rule specifically identifying labor in tobacco fields as hazardous and prohibiting children from working in direct contact with tobacco in any form. In order to avoid placing an undue burden on family farms, the rule need only apply to farms using hired laborers. Additionally, such a rule would be met with support among many in the tobacco industry as many companies have already taken steps to combat child labor practices. U.S. companies such as Altria Group and Reynolds American have voluntarily prohibited their suppliers from employing children under the age of 16. These important steps made by industry should be met with strong action by the Department of Labor.

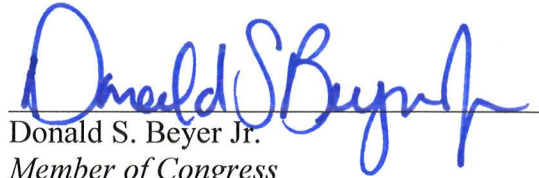
Your administration has already taken important steps in combatting the dangers that tobacco and nicotine pose to children. In May of this year, the Food and Drug Administration issued new regulations prohibiting the sale of e-cigarettes to children under the age of 18. When this new rule was issued, Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell argued that it has been well known that “nicotine does not belong in the hands of children.” Additionally, in January of this year, you signed the Child Nicotine Poisoning Prevention Act into law. This bipartisan legislation requires special packaging for liquid nicotine products in order to prevent children from being exposed to their contents.

We strongly encourage you to use the final months of your administration to build on these achievements, and ensure that children under the age of 18 are not permitted to work on tobacco farms. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



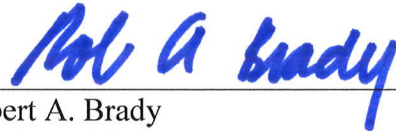
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



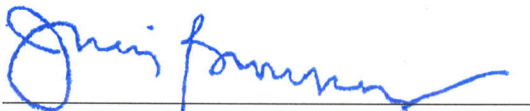
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



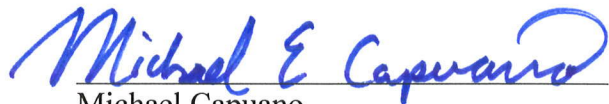
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



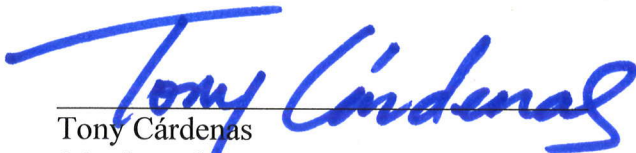
Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress



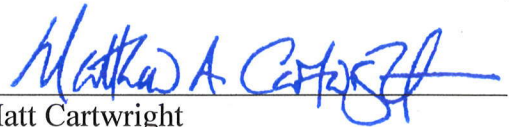
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



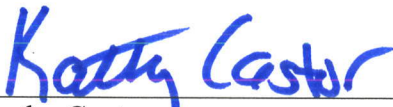
Michael Capuano
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

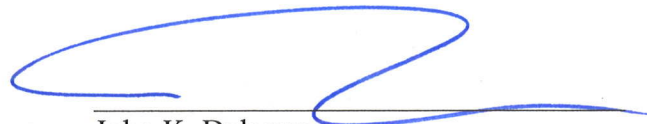


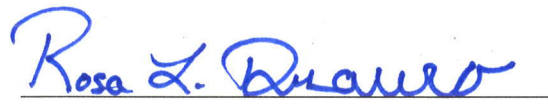
Judy Chu
Member of Congress


Steve Cohen
Member of Congress


John Conyers
Member of Congress

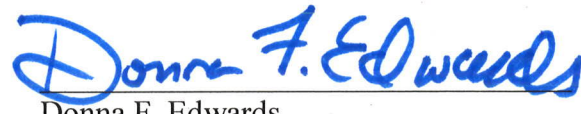

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

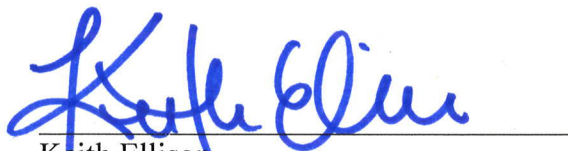

John K. Delaney
Member of Congress

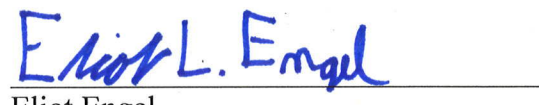

Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress


Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress


Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress


Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

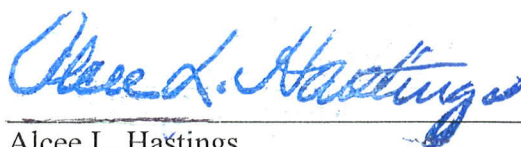

Eliot Engel
Member of Congress


Alan Grayson
Member of Congress

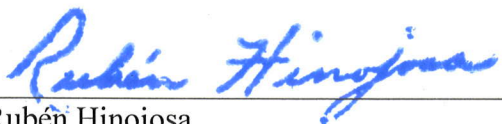

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



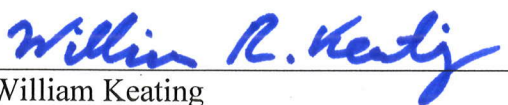
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



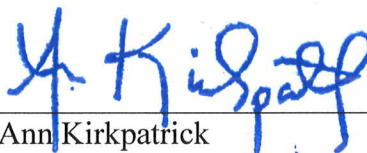
Rubén Hinojosa
Member of Congress



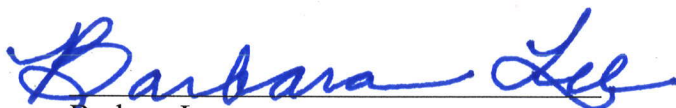
Michael Honda
Member of Congress



William Keating
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



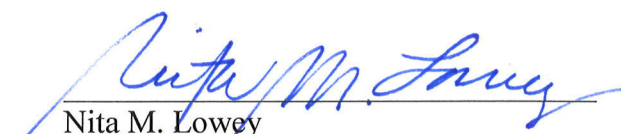
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



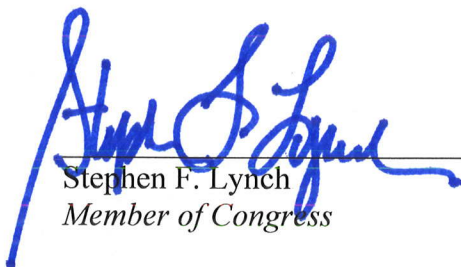
Ted Lieu
Member of Congress



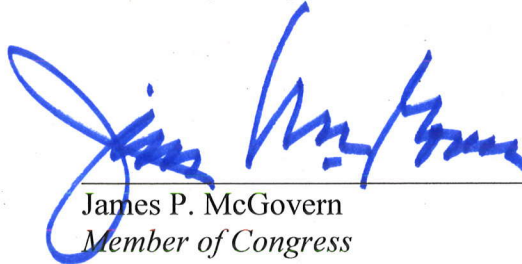
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



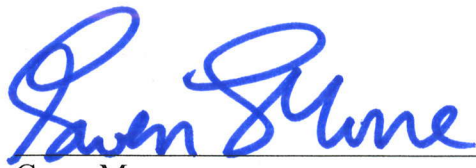
Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress



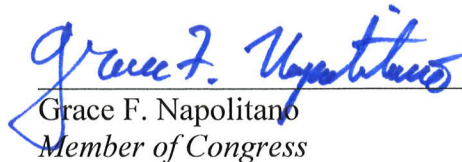
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



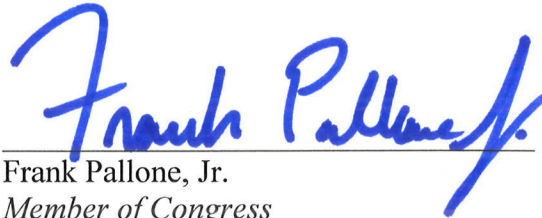
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



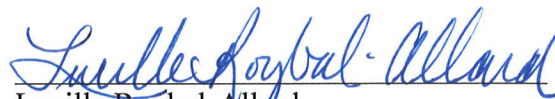
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



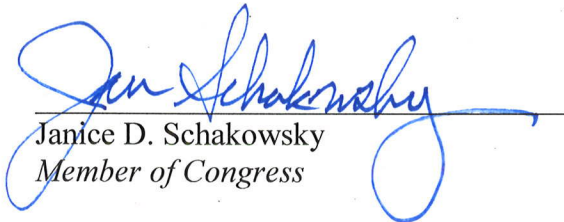
Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



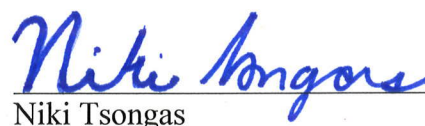
Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress



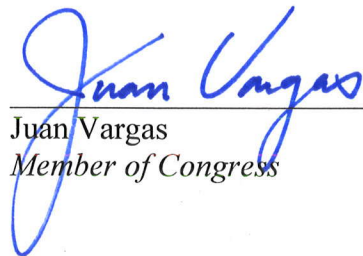
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



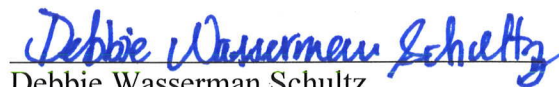
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici

Suzanne Bonamici
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