

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 2, 2015

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

Dear President Obama,

It has been more than a year since the numbers of unaccompanied Central American children arriving at the U.S. border spiked to record levels, generating a major public debate about how we as a country should respond. Although children, families, and adults continue to flee Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, the number of migrants arriving at our border has dropped, in large part as a result of the Government of Mexico's increased enforcement efforts. Since July 2014, apprehensions of Central Americans in Mexico increased by 70 percent over the previous year.

We write to you out of concern that apprehensions and deportations of migrants in Mexico are taking place in a way that does not live up to the standards of protection to which both our countries aspire. As the Government of Mexico continues with its enforcement efforts, we need to find ways to more effectively assist them in continuing to build the institutional capacity of its migration management and protection agencies, including the National Institute for Migration (INM), National System for Integral Family Development (DIF), and the Mexican Commission to Assist Refugees (COMAR).

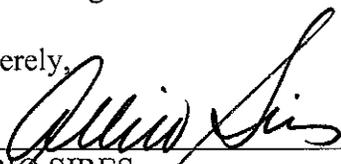
A focus on institution building is needed. There have been allegations of corruption and structural deficiencies regarding the INM that raise questions about its ability to effectively enforce Mexico's migration laws and provide services to migrants in the country. Since 2012, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) has received at least 1,220 complaints of human rights violations committed by the INM against migrants. Corruption is also a problem: INM agents have participated in extortion, kidnapping, and other crimes against migrants. In September 2015, four agents in Chiapas were detained on charges of human smuggling. There is an urgent need to focus on the formalization of recruitment standards for the INM, thorough training of new agents, and the development and implementation of robust mechanism for supervision such as a functioning Internal Affairs Unit.

Institutional strengthening is also needed for those agencies that are tasked with identifying and assisting those individuals that require protection, whether they are asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, or victims of human trafficking. In particular, COMAR, which processes refugee claims, has only 15 asylum adjudicators for the whole country. Likewise, DIF, which provides services to unaccompanied children, lacks the shelter space or staff to properly attend to them; as a result, many unaccompanied migrant children remain in detention centers with the adult population.

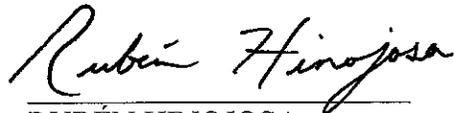
Through the Merida Initiative, the United States has provided important assistance to Mexico on institution building and accountability, especially in the law enforcement and criminal justice sectors. We believe that future U.S. assistance should also focus on addressing the institutional weaknesses within the agencies responsible for migration enforcement and protection in Mexico in order to ensure that Mexico's migration laws are enforced in a way that upholds Mexico's international commitments and our shared values.

We look forward to hearing from you as you develop your plans to strengthen Mexico's migration agencies.

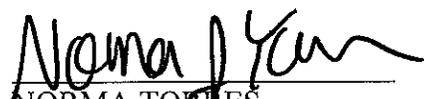
Sincerely,


ALBIO SIRES
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Committee on Foreign Affairs

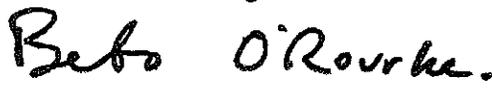

ELIOT ENGEL
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs


RUBÉN HINOJOSA
Member of Congress

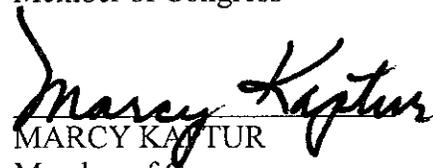

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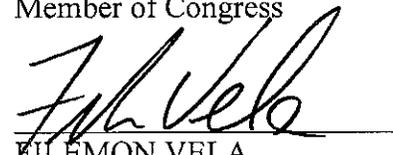

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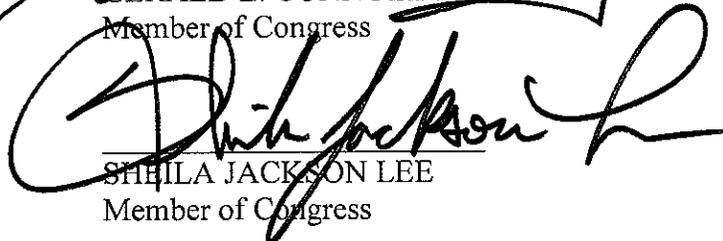

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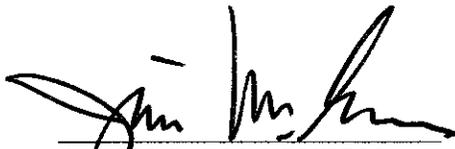

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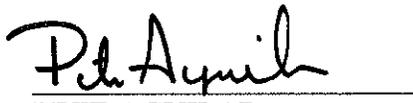

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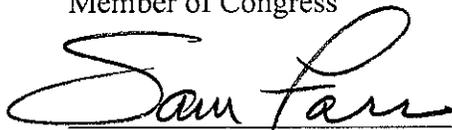

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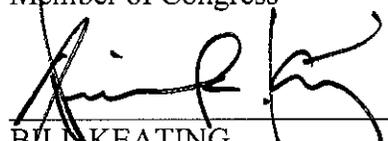

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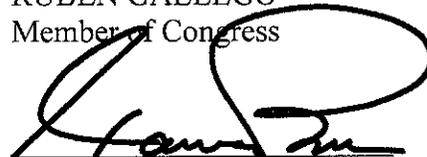

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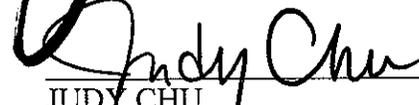

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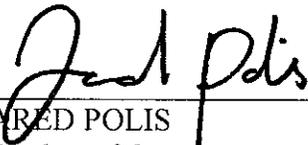

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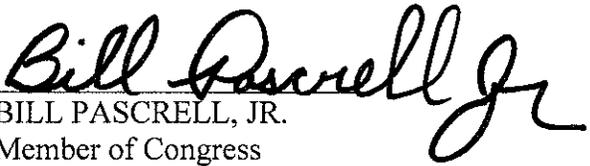

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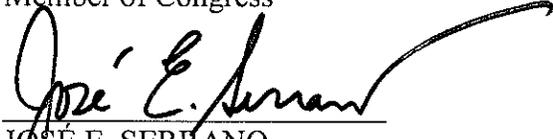

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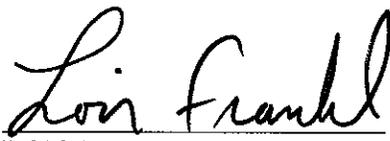

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