

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 3, 2026

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Scott
Chairman
Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and
Urban Affairs
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and
Urban Affairs
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Warren, Chairman Collins, and Vice Chairman Murray,

The next surface transportation reauthorization bill will be one of the most consequential pieces of legislation Congress considers this year. Surface transportation policy has major implications for safety and accessibility, affordability, job growth, and the climate. Historically, this legislation is a shining example of bipartisanship, reflecting the priorities of both parties. The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)* was no different. The bipartisan law modernized our infrastructure, created thousands of union jobs, and made travel safer for all drivers, pedestrians, riders, and passengers. The *IIJA* accomplished these goals by making a historic investment in the entire transportation system, including roads, bridges, transit, and rail. To continue the progress made on these critical fronts because of the *IIJA*, we urge the committees

of jurisdiction to continue this system-wide investment, and include the crucial priorities outlined in this letter.

1. Protect Infrastructure Grants from Political Interference

The Trump administration's unlawful interference with infrastructure grant awards has undermined important infrastructure projects across the country and raised serious questions about this Administration's commitment to implementing the law. Over the past year, the Department of Transportation (DOT) has recklessly and often illegally paused and canceled funding for crucial infrastructure projects that would make roads safer and travel more affordable.¹ President Donald Trump has targeted large and small projects alike, pausing funding for big transit projects in Chicago, New York, and New Jersey and small road safety projects in blue states across the country.² Most recently, DOT reportedly rescinded nearly \$1 billion in funding for electric vehicle chargers and electric buses — funding authorized under the *IIJA* — and issued a proposed rule that could make it impossible for states to spend their National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program funding.³ These actions have injected uncertainty into every infrastructure project — raising costs, delaying timelines, jeopardizing jobs, and potentially putting lives at risk as unsafe infrastructure deteriorates without replacement or repair.

The next surface transportation bill must end this political interference with federal infrastructure funding. First, as a condition of passing any surface transportation reauthorization, the Trump administration must immediately cease its politically motivated attacks on infrastructure projects. Congress cannot have confidence in a final bill — even one that is bipartisan and negotiated in good faith — if the Administration is actively failing to implement the laws already in place. Second, the next surface transportation bill must include protections for existing and future grant funding against inappropriate political interference. If this Administration remains able to ignore any compromise and act in a partisan, political manner, it casts the value of any legislative exercise into question. Americans should have confidence that DOT is distributing infrastructure grant funding in an objective, neutral manner and not weaponizing this funding to serve President Trump's political agenda. Politicizing the grantmaking process serves only to undermine the working parent trying to get home safely and on time.

2. Make Transportation Safer

¹ Corrigan Salerno, *Grants Are Under Attack on Two Fronts: Congress Should Stand Up to USDOT and Assert Its Power Over the Purse*, *Transportation for America*, Transportation4America (Sept. 17, 2025), <https://t4america.org/2025/09/17/grants-are-under-attack-on-two-fronts-congress-should-stand-up-to-usdot-and-assert-its-power-over-the-purse/>.

² Stefanos Chen, *Second Avenue Subway Project Faces Funding Uncertainty as M.T.A. Warns of Delays*, N.Y. Times (Feb. 25, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/25/nyregion/second-avenue-subway-mta.html>.

³ Rachel Frazin, *Trump targets funding to blue states, including Minnesota and Colorado, over EVs and HIV programs*, The Hill (Feb. 5, 2026), <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/5725217-trump-blue-states-funding-minnesota-colorado-evs-hiv>; Michelle Lewis, *Trump can't freeze NEVI funds, so he's trying to stall them — again*, Electrek (Feb. 10, 2026), <https://electrek.co/2026/02/10/trump-cant-freeze-nevi-funds-so-hes-trying-to-stall-them-again/>.

America faces a transportation safety crisis. Traffic fatalities are too high. Train-related deaths and derailments are too common. The rate of vehicular death in the United States is significantly higher than that of its peers — four times higher than that in Britain or Germany — and traffic deaths increased by 22 percent between 2013 and 2022.⁴ The next surface transportation reauthorization must urgently address America's surface transportation crisis through safety-focused investments, accountability requirements, and rigorous safety standards.

Although roadway fatalities are finally beginning to decline, the road to zero fatalities remains long, with nearly 40,000 people dying on our roads in 2024.⁵ The road safety crisis is particularly acute for pedestrians and cyclists who account for 20 percent of all motor-vehicle-related deaths.⁶ Rural roads are especially deadly for all their users — accounting for half of all traffic fatalities.⁷ Unsafe roads also pose increased risk to people with disabilities due to inaccessible public rights of way.⁸ The next surface transportation bill must maintain the same focus on safety as the *IIJA* by ensuring both states and the U.S. Department of Transportation make systemic investments in road design and construction that make all road users — motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and public transit riders — safer. The reauthorization bill should retain and expand existing grant programs aimed at making roads safer.⁹ It must also ensure that states are reducing fatalities on their roads or else face requirements to invest federal dollars in highway safety projects. A reform like this could prevent as many as 1,000 traffic fatalities and eliminate 320,000 crashes per year.¹⁰ Road safety begins with the road itself, and the next surface transportation bill has the potential to move the nation meaningfully closer to zero road deaths.

The next transportation bill must also prioritize vehicle safety standards and technology that can save lives today. The *IIJA* made important progress in requiring the adoption of lifesaving vehicle and truck safety policies, such as automatic emergency braking standards. By ensuring these standards are finalized and implemented, the next surface transportation bill can help prevent drunk driving, speeding, and distracted driving, which contribute to tens of thousands of deaths every year. Additionally, although autonomous vehicles (AVs) could potentially curb road deaths, any AV-related provisions in the next surface transportation bill must prioritize safety, accountability, transparency, accessibility, and local control. Road users should not be guinea pigs for AV companies to assess their self-driving technology under weaker

⁴ Alexander Nazaryan, *Why Are U.S. Traffic Deaths Increasing Again?*, N.Y. Times (Mar. 18, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/18/headway/motor-vehicles-fatalities-newsletter.html>.

⁵ Press Release, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *NHTSA Estimates 39,345 Traffic Fatalities in 2024* (Apr. 8, 2025).

⁶ Federal Highway Administration, <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/pedestrian-bicyclist> (last visited Mar. 17, 2026).

⁷ Paula Raymond, *America's Rural Roads: Beautiful and Deadly*, Governors Highway Safety Association (Sept. 2022), https://www.ghsa.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/rural_report.pdf.

⁸ Schwartz et al, *Disability and pedestrian road traffic injury: a scoping review*, Health & Place (Sept. 2022), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353829222001575>.

⁹ *Safer Streets, Stronger Economies*, Smart Growth America (Mar. 2015), <https://wordpress.smartgrowthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/safer-streets-stronger-economies.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Surface Transportation Reauthorization: Four Key Risks and Opportunities for Sustainable Transportation*, Evergreen Action (2025), <https://www.evergreenaction.com/documents/STR-Four-Key-Risks-and-Opportunities-for-Sustainable-Transportation.pdf>.

safety standards.¹¹ In particular, any AV language must address system performance in complex environments, company accountability, incident data sharing, use of forced arbitration clauses, law enforcement interactions, remote operation, job displacement, and cybersecurity. States and cities also must retain the authority to determine whether AVs operate on their roads. For those reasons, whether focused on human drivers or AVs, the next transportation bill must prioritize measurable safety improvements.

The surface transportation authorization must also address rail safety, which remains an urgent concern for communities and railroad workers. Roughly 15 months after the *IIJA*'s passage, the derailment of a freight train in East Palestine, Ohio, exposed the serious risks that freight railroads continue to pose to nearby communities and railroad workers. More than 4,000 train derailments have occurred since 2020, and progress to prevent derailments and other safety incidents has stalled.¹² As with roads, unsafe trains are particularly dangerous for people with disabilities. At the same time, the railroad industry is increasingly adopting automation technologies to trim the rail workforce that is critical to keeping America's railroads safe.¹³ The next surface transportation reauthorization must include existing bipartisan and comprehensive safety provisions that emerged with the support of safety experts and railroad labor organizations.

3. Address the Affordability Crisis

The next surface transportation reauthorization must reduce transportation costs, which are the second-highest household expense for American families.¹⁴ Congress can immediately reduce costs for American families by fixing America's roads, expanding flexibility for travelers, investing in electric vehicle infrastructure, and improving climate resilience.

Deteriorating roads saddle American families with persistent and often unexpected costs. Potholes and crumbling roadways degrade personal vehicles, increase fuel costs, pop tires, and break axles, all of which significantly increase the cost of car ownership.¹⁵ According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, roughly 40 percent of U.S. roads are in poor or mediocre condition.¹⁶ Americans are rightfully tired of our broken roads, which is why nearly 80 percent of Americans support fixing existing roads before building new ones.¹⁷ To fix this long-standing

¹¹ David Zipper, *Are Autonomous Vehicles Safer Than Human Drivers? We Don't Know Yet*, Bloomberg (Jan. 6, 2026), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2026-01-06/are-autonomous-vehicles-safer-than-human-drivers-we-don-t-know-yet>.

¹² *Interactive Rail Safety Map: See Derailments in Communities Across the U.S.*, National League of Cities (June 1, 2023), <https://www.nlc.org/resource/interactive-rail-safety-map-see-derailments-in-communities-across-the-u-s/>.

¹³ *SMART Transportation Division Public Comment*, Docket No. FRA-2025-0059 (July 9, 2025), <https://www.smart-union.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/SMART-TD-Docket-No.-FRA-2025-0059.pdf>.

¹⁴ *High Cost of Transportation in the United States*, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (Jan. 24, 2024), <https://itdp.org/2024/01/24/high-cost-transportation-united-states/>.

¹⁵ Deron Lovaas, *Why a Fix-It-First Policy Is Critical in Transportation Investments*, NRDC (Oct. 6, 2011), <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/deron-lovaas/why-fix-it-first-policy-critical-transportation-investments>.

¹⁶ *2025 Infrastructure Report Card*, American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/> (last visited Mar. 17, 2026).

¹⁷ *Fix-It-First Principle*, Transportation for America, <https://t4america.org/principle/fix-it-first> (last visited Mar. 17, 2026).

problem, the next surface transportation bill must prioritize maintaining our roads and bringing them into a state of good repair. Focusing on road maintenance over road expansion is critical to reducing travel costs for American families.

Providing Americans flexible transportation options will also drive down costs. Owning a car costs more than \$10,000 per year per car.¹⁸ Families deserve affordable options for daily travel, including transit, passenger rail, walking, and biking. By developing other ways to get around, families can save money on fuel, reduce vehicle maintenance costs, reduce insurance costs, and even avoid purchasing additional vehicles altogether.¹⁹ In fact, reducing car travel by just one in five trips would save the average family \$2,000 per year.²⁰

To provide greater freedom in transportation options, the surface transportation bill must fund the entire transportation system by providing a historic investment in transit and passenger rail and retain and expand grant programs that expand walking and biking infrastructure in urban and rural communities alike. Transit and rail advocates have estimated a \$300-billion five-year investment from the Highway Trust fund and advanced appropriations in transit and passenger rail could deliver a world-class transit and rail system that drives down costs for travelers.²¹ The level of funding is crucial, but just as important is the reliability that comes with five years of guaranteed funding. The next surface transportation bill must deliver that reliability for both capital improvements and transit operations. Additionally, several existing formula grant programs were designed to make investments in affordable transportation, but funds from these programs are often reassigned for other purposes that do not advance their intended goals.²² By strengthening guardrails against diverting funds, these programs can be deployed to actually meet their statutory purposes and drive down costs by giving more travelers the option to walk, cycle, or ride transit. Furthermore, the federal government should encourage communities to prioritize transit-oriented development projects that simultaneously address housing and transportation costs.²³ All investments must ensure the highest standards of accessibility across all modes of transportation so that people with disabilities and those facing transportation barriers have access to the same travel options as others. Ensuring transportation options are

¹⁸ *Average Cost of Owning and Operating an Automobile (assuming 15,000 vehicle-miles per year)*, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, <https://www.bts.gov/content/average-cost-owning-and-operating-automobilea-assuming-15000-vehicle-miles-year> (last visited Mar. 17, 2026).

¹⁹ *Transit Savings Grow as Auto Costs and Gas Prices Increase*, American Public Transportation Association (Sept. 27, 2023), <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-POLICY-BRIEF-Transit-Savings-09.27.2023.pdf>.

²⁰ *States Can Quantify the Benefits of Climate-Friendly Transportation Options with RMI's Smarter Modes Calculator*, Rocky Mountain Institute, <https://rmi.org/states-can-quantify-the-benefits-of-climate-friendly-transportation-options-with-rmis-smarter-modes-calculator/> (last visited Mar. 17, 2026).

²¹ *Surface Transportation Authorization Recommendations*, American Public Transportation Association (Feb. 20, 2026), <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Surface-Trans-Auth-Recommendations-022026.pdf>.

²² *State of the System: tracking transportation data*, Transportation for America, <https://t4america.org/data-hub/> (last visited Mar. 26, 2026); Ian Duncan, *States siphoned millions in infrastructure law climate, emissions funds*, Wash. Post (July 27, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2023/07/27/infrastructure-law-climate-change-money/>.

²³ Yonah Freemark, *Spurring Housing Development Near Transit Through Federally Funded Land Acquisition*, Urban Institute (Apr. 22, 2024), <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/spurring-housing-development-near-transit-through-federally-funded-land-acquisition>.

accessible benefits millions of riders and strengthens the economic and social fabric of communities. With American families feeling the pain of high costs, the next transportation bill must help all families save money by giving them the ability to choose affordable travel options.

Floods, storms, wildfires, and other extreme weather events, supercharged by climate change, are increasingly destroying American infrastructure and imposing heavy costs on travelers and taxpayers. Remote location and limited resources make it especially hard for rural communities to recover from climate-driven infrastructure damage.²⁴ The surface transportation bill should include investments that make our roads, bridges, and railroads more resilient against these extreme weather events. Such investments will not only save taxpayers on future cleanup costs, they will save Americans billions of dollars in lost income following major storms by keeping roads and transit systems open and available to use.²⁵

Additionally, the transportation bill should invest in electric vehicles (EV) and EV charging infrastructure. These investments will save drivers money at the pump, especially as global volatility in oil prices has resulted in spiking gasoline prices at home. Electric vehicles notably save the average family \$500 a year compared to gas-powered vehicles and result in 40-50 percent lower maintenance and repair costs over the vehicle's lifespan.²⁶ The bill should also reject efforts to block the adoption of electric vehicles or to punitively tax electric vehicle owners. Such policies would increase costs for American drivers during an economically challenging period, worsen air quality and climate change, and raise little revenue.²⁷ Instead, the next surface transportation bill should invest in EV adoption — lowering household costs, supporting American energy independence, and creating healthier communities.

4. Create Good, Union Jobs

The *IJJA* turned America back into a nation of builders, creating nearly 2 million construction and manufacturing jobs and more than 700,000 transportation sector jobs.²⁸ Infrastructure investments also drive higher wages and create a more productive economy, which

²⁴ Junod et al, *Intersecting Vulnerabilities: Disability and Climate Disasters in Rural America*, Urban Institute (Aug. 2024), https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Intersecting_Vulnerabilities_Disability_and_Climate%20Disasters_Rural_America.pdf.

²⁵ *The Preparedness Payoff: The Economic Benefits of Investing in Climate Resilience*, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, <https://www.uschamber.com/security/the-preparedness-payoff-the-economic-benefits-of-investing-in-climate-resilience> (last visited Mar. 17, 2026).

²⁶ *How Affordable Electric Vehicles in 2026 Help Drivers Save More Money Than Ever Before*, Public Citizen, <https://www.citizen.org/news/how-affordable-electric-vehicles-in-2026-help-drivers-save-more-money-than-ever-before/> (last visited Mar. 17, 2026).

²⁷ *Surface Transportation Reauthorization: Four Key Risks and Opportunities for Sustainable Transportation*, Evergreen Action (2025), <https://www.evergreenaction.com/documents/STR-Four-Key-Risks-and-Opportunities-for-Sustainable-Transportation.pdf>.

²⁸ Press Release, U.S. Department of Transportation, *Investing in America: U.S. Department of Transportation Celebrates Creation of More Than 1.7 Million Jobs* (Feb. 18, 2026), <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/investing-america-us-department-transportation-celebrates-creation-more-17-million>.

helps generate high private and public sector returns on the original public investment.²⁹ Congress should recognize that infrastructure investments are prolific job creators and make the next transportation reauthorization bill the largest infrastructure investment yet.

Congress should take specific lessons from the *IJA* to ensure the next transportation bill creates high-quality, union jobs. Transportation and infrastructure investments drive the creation of good jobs and are built to last when those investments harness the power of union labor. Notably, transportation, infrastructure, and manufacturing workers are unionized at more than double the private-sector rate,³⁰ and that union density is an important reason that these workers earn more than other middle- and low-wage workers.³¹ Investing in America's infrastructure must also represent an investment in high-paying union jobs that can sustain families and build out America's middle class.

These results don't happen by accident; they happen through purposeful federal policy, such as *IJA* provisions that encourage grant recipients to use project labor agreements and pay workers the prevailing wage. The next transportation reauthorization bill must include project labor agreements for construction projects, safety and job protections for transit, railroad, and construction workers, prevailing wage requirements, and an expansion of registered apprenticeships while asserting the right of transportation workers to organize and collectively bargain. Federal funds should support projects that create good-paying jobs and should not create loopholes that undermine labor protections or cause the loss of such work. Finally, just like the *IJA*, the next bill should include Buy America provisions, which require federally funded infrastructure projects to include common-sense procurement preferences for materials and products produced by workers in the United States. These provisions will lay the foundation for a world-class transportation system, high-powered economy, and a healthy middle class.

5. Address the Climate Crisis and Protect Public Health

The transportation sector is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the United States, fueling expensive and dangerous climate-related disasters. The next surface transportation bill will have a tremendous impact on the climate — either by locking in higher emissions or by taking meaningful steps to curb them. The *IJA* made tremendous progress making the nation's transportation system more sustainable and resilient, including establishing several targeted grant programs that funded EV charging, transit, walking, and biking infrastructure, all of which help reduce emissions from transportation. The next surface transportation bill must build on this progress by expanding EV charging infrastructure and carbon emission reduction grant programs and establishing emission reduction goals for infrastructure investments.

²⁹ Josh Bivens, The Short- and Long-Term Impact of Infrastructure Investments on Employment and Economic Activity in the U.S. Economy, Economic Policy Institute (July 1, 2014), <https://www.epi.org/publication/impact-of-infrastructure-investments/>.

³⁰ Union Members — 2025, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm> (last visited Mar. 17, 2026).

³¹ Joseph W. Kane, Seizing the U.S. Infrastructure Opportunity: Investing in Current and Future Workers, Brookings (Dec. 2022), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/infrastructure-workforce/>.

EVs are central to the United States's ability to reduce emissions and stave off the worst effects of climate change. The *IIJA* made a crucial down payment on building EV charging infrastructure across the country. Beyond making transportation more affordable, as mentioned earlier, EV charging investments enable greater driver confidence in EVs, spurring adoption and driving down emissions and local air pollution as a result. The surface transportation bill must invest further in EV charging infrastructure, as well as in programs that invest in electric and hybrid trains, buses, boats, and related charging infrastructure, while rejecting any punitive attempts to curb EV adoption. With this next surface transportation bill, the future of electric vehicle adoption hangs in the balance. Congress must seize this opportunity and send a clear message to the market that the federal government is committed to expanding EV investments.

Beyond EVs, the next surface transportation bill must include additional common-sense reforms that will drive down emissions and mitigate the current and future effects of the climate crisis. Under the *IIJA*, states received hundreds of billions of dollars for roads without any accountability measures in place to ensure these federal funds do not result in a massive increase of climate pollution. As a result, states spent much of their federal funding on road projects that will ultimately increase emissions — putting our climate and local air quality in danger.³² The next surface transportation bill cannot repeat this mistake. Proposals to ensure states set performance targets to reduce emissions on public roads are a good starting point for aligning infrastructure spending with climate goals.³³ States can meet these targets in a variety of flexible ways, based on their own needs, including by prioritizing investments in road maintenance, transit, transit-oriented development, walking infrastructure, biking infrastructure, and intercity passenger rail.³⁴ Infrastructure investments that lead to higher emissions are very challenging to reverse. Congress has a responsibility to use the next surface transportation bill to reduce our emissions and continue national progress on addressing climate change, not contribute to its worsening effects.

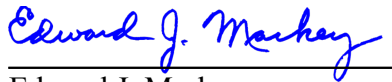
We appreciate your leadership on this historically bipartisan bill. We look forward to working with you to ensure the next surface transportation bill delivers real benefits to the American traveler by protecting against politicization, supporting safety improvements, cutting costs, creating good jobs, and protecting the climate and our health. With these priorities in mind, this bill can establish a world-class infrastructure system for decades to come.

Sincerely,

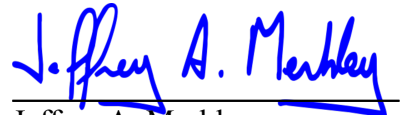
³² Corrigan Salerno, *The IIJA Is a Climate Time Bomb. Will States Defuse It?*, Transportation for America (Feb. 28, 2024), <https://t4america.org/2024/02/28/the-iija-is-a-climate-time-bomb-will-states-defuse-it/>.

³³ Press Release, Federal Highway Administration, *Biden-Harris Administration Finalizes Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Tool, Moves Climate Change Performance Measure Forward* (Nov. 22, 2023), <https://highways.dot.gov/newsroom/biden-harris-administration-finalizes-greenhouse-gas-emissions-reduction-tool-moves>.

³⁴ *The U.S. National Blueprint for Transportation Decarbonization*, Emmett Environmental Law & Policy Clinic, Harvard Law School (Jan. 2025), https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/the-us-national-blueprint-for-transportation-decarbonization-compressed_1.pdf.



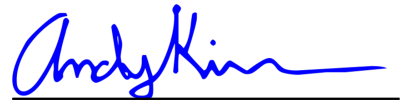
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
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Andy Kim
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Bernard Sanders
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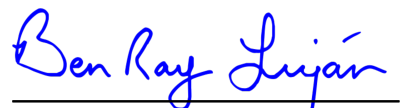
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



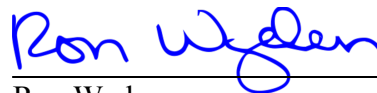
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