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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0601

CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS
AND TECHNOLOGY

May 24, 2016

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan,

On February 2, 2016, the House Pro-Choice Caucus sent you a letter urging you to disband the Select Investigative Panel (the Panel). Democratic members of the Panel and numerous leaders in both the House and Senate joined the Pro-Choice Caucus in this call. Today, because of continued abuses which jeopardize the integrity of the House and the safety of Americans, the undersigned House Democrats write once again to respectfully ask you to put a stop to this behavior and disband the Panel.

While the Panel's investigation has never been fair or fact-based, its pattern of reckless disregard for safety has escalated over the past few weeks. From the beginning, Chair Marsha Blackburn has used her unilateral subpoena power to intimidate scientific researchers, doctors, clinics, health care providers, universities, and other entities. On May 11, 2016, the majority reached a new low when it posted a press release identifying a doctor and his clinic by name. The press release's hyperbolic rhetoric and misleading allegations pose a real danger to the doctor, the staff at the clinic, and the patients of the named clinic. These recent steps are completely outside the bounds of acceptable Congressional behavior. We disgrace ourselves by allowing this misconduct to continue.

The most recent subpoenas are only the latest in a series of aggressive tactics that constitute a virtually unprecedented abuse of Congressional power, perhaps only matched by the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s. To this day, the Panel still lacks credible evidence to support its case that any federal laws were broken. Yet the Chair and majority staff continue to harass individuals, researchers, clinics, and health care facilities, issuing a total of 36 subpoenas so far, often without reaching out to the subject of the subpoena to ask for voluntary compliance first or without giving subjects sufficient time to comply. Congress simply has no business "prosecuting" these unfounded allegations.

The danger posed by the Panel is real and serious. There is a long and undeniable history of violence against women's health care clinics, physicians, and patients. As recently as November 27, 2015, a gunman murdered three people and injured nine others at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, repeating the "baby parts" rhetoric pushed by the very members of Congress leading this investigation. Despite this horrific event, the same inflammatory language has been used repeatedly during Panel hearings, in communications with the press, and in other documents. The majority has also refused to take necessary steps to protect the names and privacy of those subject to the investigation. Indeed, some names and targets have already been publicly disclosed. We are deeply disappointed by the majority's decision to continue down this road despite these well-known risks.

As Speaker of the House, you have a unique role and special responsibilities in our government. We – as well as counsel for witnesses called before the Panel -- have tried numerous times to express our concerns and see to it that they are addressed. These pleas have been met with silence. The onus is on you to put an end to this witch hunt. You cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the serious risks presented by the Panel and still claim to fulfill your responsibilities as Speaker. We implore you not to stand idly by while tax dollars are spent on a baseless investigation that endangers women, scientists, health providers, and others involved in women's health care and biomedical research. We respectfully ask that you respond to this letter in writing no later than June 6, 2016.

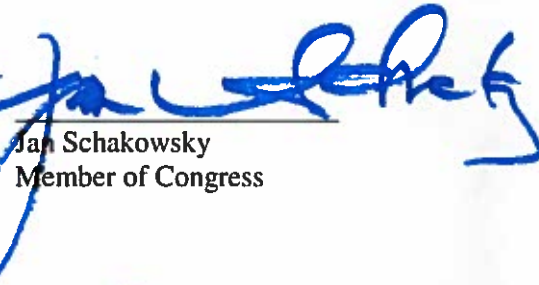
Sincerely,




Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



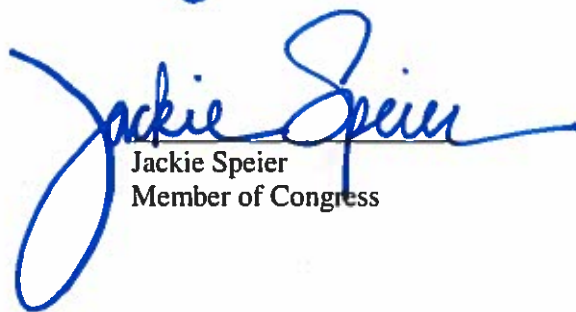
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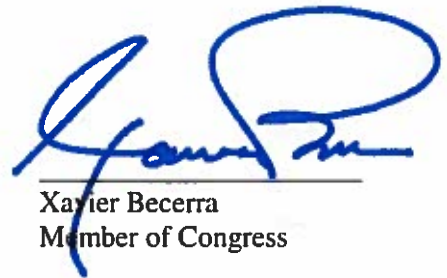
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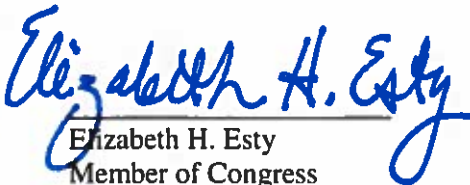
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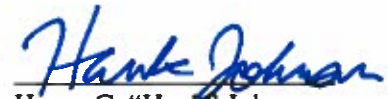

Jared Huffman
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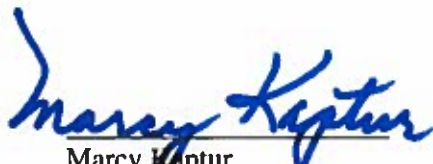

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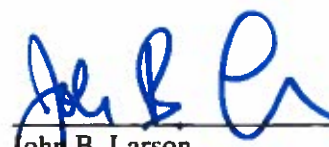

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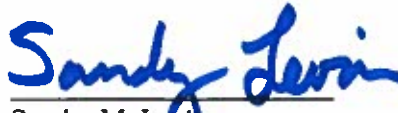

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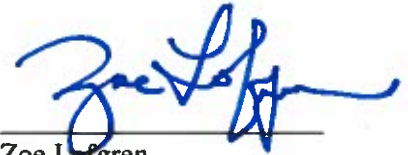
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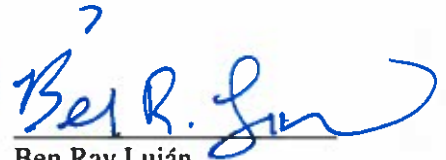
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Alan Lowenthal
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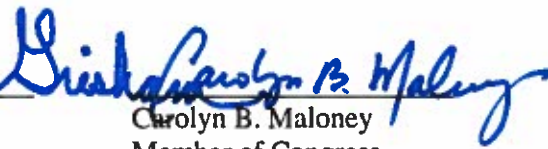
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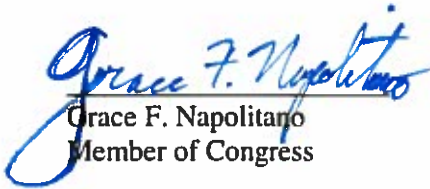


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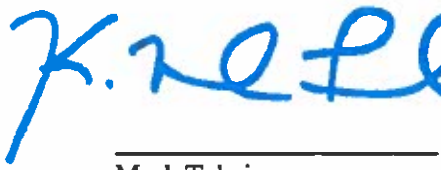
Albio Sires
Member of Congress



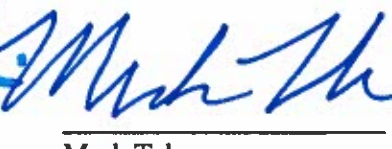
Adam Smith
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Eric Swalwell
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Mark Takai
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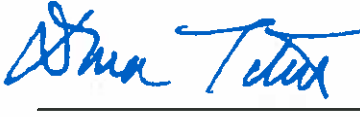
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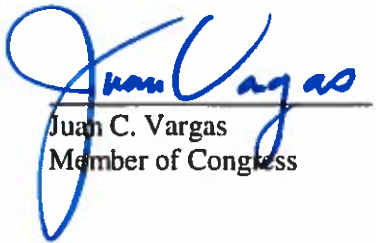
Norma Torres
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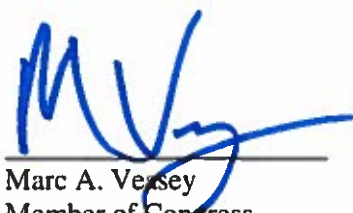
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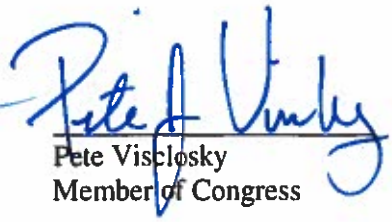
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