

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 18, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are deeply concerned that your plan to establish a Commission on Unalienable Rights is an attempt to make an end run around career experts, statutorily established State Department structures, and widely accepted interpretations of human rights law to push a narrow, discriminatory agenda that decides whose rights are worth protecting and whose rights the Administration will ignore.

We understand that the Commission's Charter tasks it with providing "advice and recommendations, for the Secretary's approval, to guide U.S. diplomatic and foreign policy decisions and actions with respect to human rights in international settings."

A group of career, non-partisan human rights experts has been doing this work for decades, as mandated by Congress, through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) and the Office of the Legal Adviser. Furthermore, the Office of Policy Planning, which is charged with "supply[ing] all staff and support functions for the Commission," has no particular institutional expertise in human rights. We have received inadequate information about how the initial commissioners were selected, to whom the body will report, and how Congress will be consulted.

Why is the department proposing this seemingly redundant, unaccountable body?

The answer to us is clear: to push aside the modern human rights norms that the United States helped establish in favor of narrower protections for women, including reproductive rights; for members of the LGBTQI community; and for other minorities. While centuries ago, the concepts of "unalienable rights" and "natural law" were used by Enlightenment thinkers, today their use sits outside the rich body of international human rights norms and law. These terms imply "God-given" or religiously-based rights, affecting issues including gender, sexuality, and reproductive rights. Establishing a commission to advance these concepts represents a sharp departure from long-standing American foreign policy and legal traditions and

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
July 18, 2019
Page Two

threatens critical gains toward gender equality, LGBTQI human rights, and other fundamental rights.

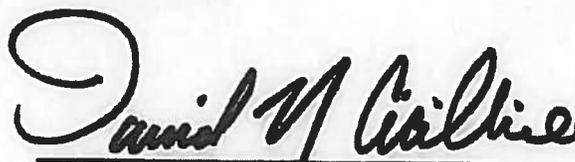
We require clear assurances that this Commission is not merely a scheme to inject religion into government policy-making. After all, the First Amendment guarantees the separation of church and state. So it is important for Congress to understand how the Department defines natural law and the place of religion in the Commission's work.

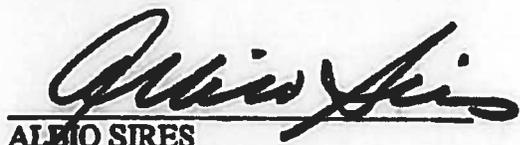
To help us answer that question and determine whether any legislative action is necessary, House Foreign Affairs Committee staff have sought and, after an extended period of time and numerous requests, received one 'eleventh hour' briefing on this matter. The briefing was wholly inadequate and many prior requests from Committee staff for information remain unanswered. We therefore, request any and all records, sent, received, created, or edited by officials in S/P, the Office of the Secretary, P, M, J, and/or the Front Offices of L and DRL including internal and external correspondence, referring or relating in any way to the Department of State Commission on Unalienable Rights. Please provide these no later than July 25, 2019.

We thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,


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Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs


DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress


ALBIO SIRES
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TED DEUTCH
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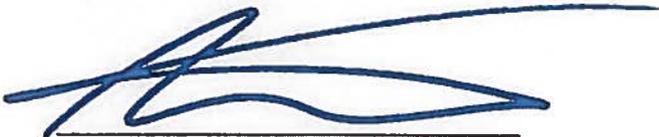
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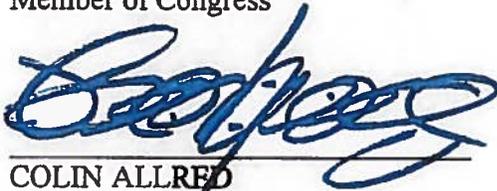
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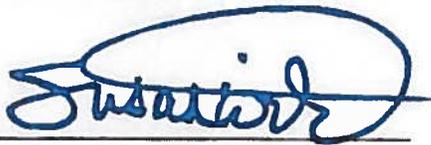
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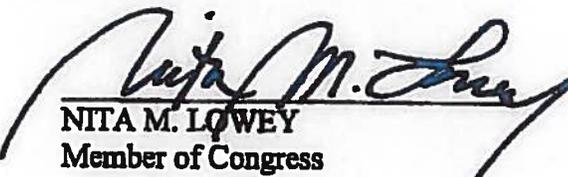

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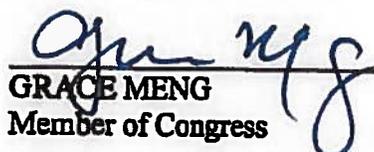

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Member of Congress

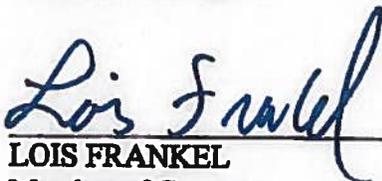

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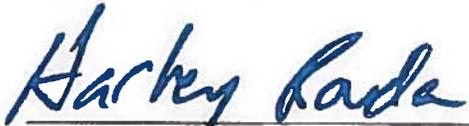

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