

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear House and Senate Leaders,

While our economy is showing signs of recovery with the addition of 171,000 jobs in October 2012 and the unemployment under 8%, over 12 million Americans remain unemployed. The long-term unemployment rate – the share of unemployed workers who have been unemployed for 27 weeks or longer – was over 40% throughout the entirety of 2010 and 2011, and persists at a rate of 40.6% in October 2012. This is an unprecedented level of long-term unemployment; the previous peak, in June 1983, was just 26%.

Unemployment benefits are a proven lifeline to families that they rely on to help pay for necessities such as rent, groceries, and utilities. Expansions to the unemployment insurance program enacted in the Recovery Act and subsequent legislation in 2009 and 2010 lifted over 3.2 million Americans out of poverty in 2010, and 2.3 million in 2011 including over 600,000 children.

As House and Senate leadership negotiate legislation addressing expiring tax provisions, cuts mandated by sequestration, and the Medicare sustainable growth rate, we urge you to include a robust extension of federal unemployment benefits for American workers. Given the unprecedented levels of long-term unemployment our nation currently faces, a full extension of unemployment benefits through 2013 should represent the minimum acceptable extension in any year-end compromise legislation. Should Congress fail to act by the last week of December, over two million workers will immediately lose their federal unemployment benefits

Disconcertingly, federal unemployment benefits were already reduced earlier this year; the total cap on combined state and federal unemployment benefits was cut from 99 weeks at the beginning of 2012 to 73 weeks currently. Additionally, the need to extend federal unemployment benefits is amplified by unprecedented cuts to both the amount and duration of unemployment benefits made by a number of states.

We also have serious concerns about proposals that divert unemployment funds from direct recipients or that subject recipients to new drug testing and education requirements which

create barriers for our nation's unemployed. We encourage House and Senate leadership to ensure that states use their unemployment funds, as they have historically done, to compensate recipients and not for any other purpose, and reject efforts to create new barriers for eligible individuals seeking unemployment benefits.

Reducing federal unemployment benefits would plunge hundreds of thousands of Americans into poverty and jeopardize our nation's economic recovery. With millions of American workers relying on these benefits to make ends meet as our nation's economic recovery continues to take hold, now is not the time to roll back this critical lifeline. We urge you to come together and ensure that unemployment benefits remain available to American workers when they need it most.

Sincerely,



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Gary Peters
Member of Congress



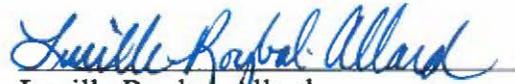
Sander Levin
Member of Congress



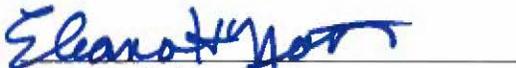
Pete Stark
Member of Congress



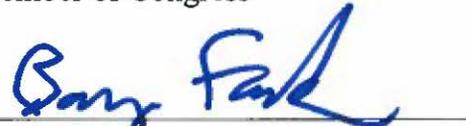
John Conyers
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



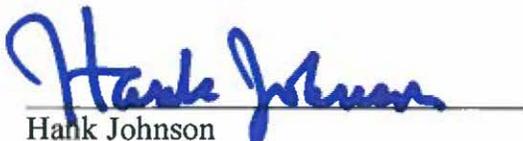
Barney Frank
Member of Congress



Laura Richardson
Member of Congress



Donna M. Christensen
Member of Congress



Hank Johnson
Member of Congress



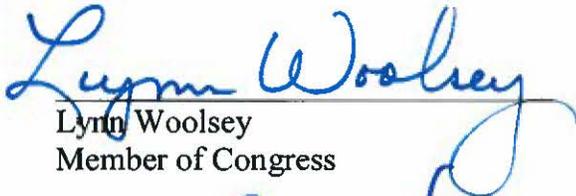
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress



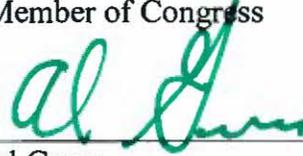
Mike Honda
Member of Congress



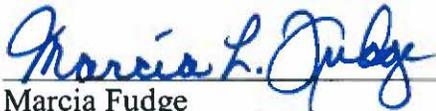
Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



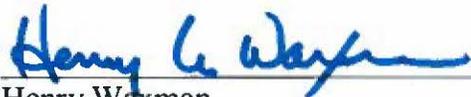
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Marcia Fudge
Member of Congress



Henry Waxman
Member of Congress



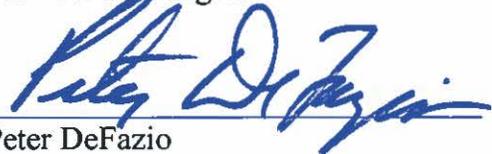
Janice Schakowsky
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Bob Filner
Member of Congress



Joe Baca
Member of Congress



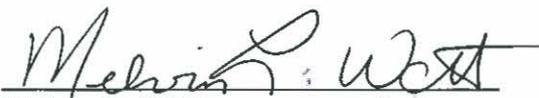
Peter DeFazio
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Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Melvin L. Watt
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

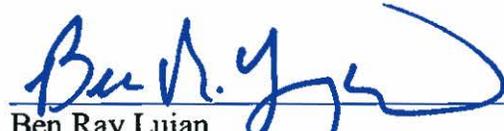

Yvette Clarke
Member of Congress


Steve Cohen
Member of Congress


Charles Rangel
Member of Congress

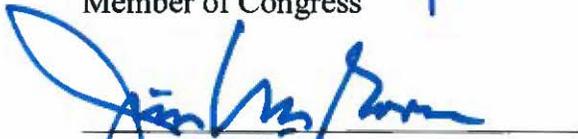

Dale Kildee
Member of Congress


Judy Chu
Member of Congress


Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress


Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress

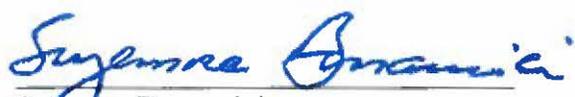

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress


James P. McGovern
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David Cicilline
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Albio Sires
Member of Congress


Hansen Clarke
Member of Congress

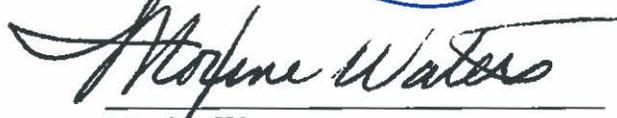

Suzanne Bonamici
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George Miller
Member of Congress


Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress


Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

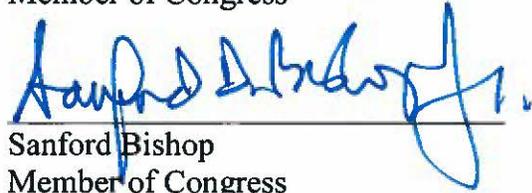

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



Anna Eschoo
Member of Congress



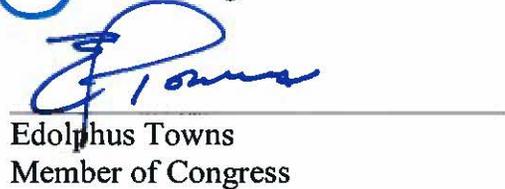
Sanford Bishop
Member of Congress



G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



John Lewis
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Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress



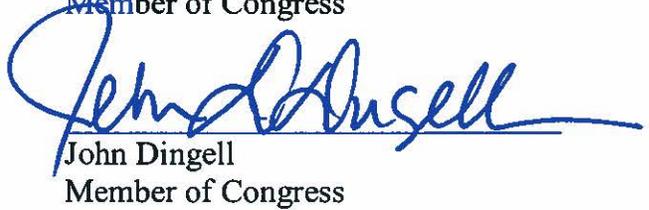
James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



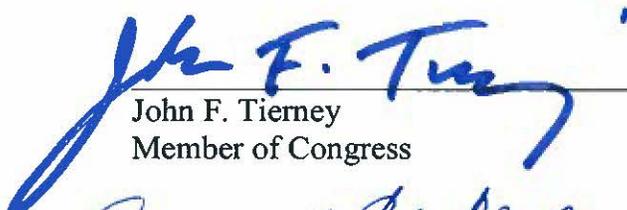
Michael Doyle
Member of Congress



Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



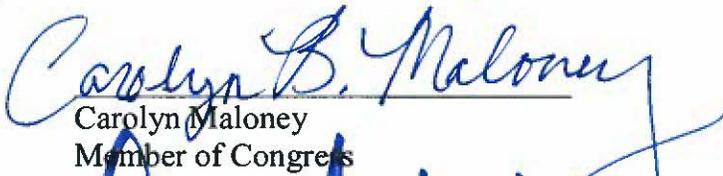
John Dingell
Member of Congress



John F. Tierney
Member of Congress



Terri Sewell
Member of Congress



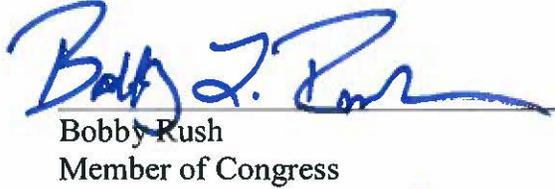
Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



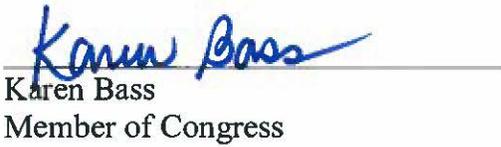
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



David Loebsack
Member of Congress



Bobby Rush
Member of Congress



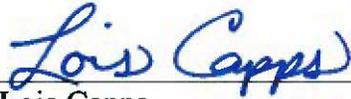
Karen Bass
Member of Congress



Janice Hahn
Member of Congress



David Curson
Member of Congress



Lois Capps
Member of Congress



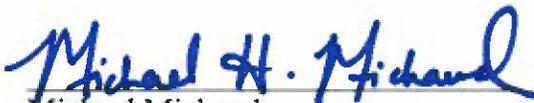
Gene Green
Member of Congress



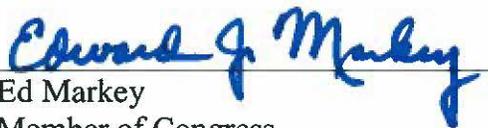
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Michael Michaud
Member of Congress



Ed Markey
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



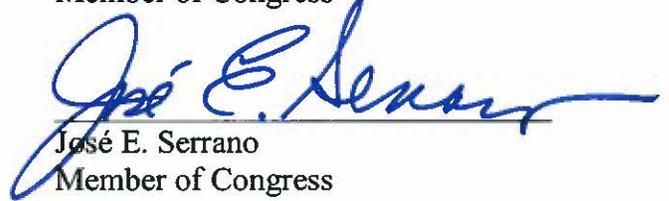
Pedro Pierluisi
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Rubén Hinojosa
Member of Congress



Doris O. Matsui
Member of Congress