Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 17, 2014

The Honorable Joseph Kabila Kabange
President
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Gombe, Kinshasa

The Honorable Augustin Matata Ponyo
Prime Minister
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Gombe, Kinshasa

Dear President Kabila and Prime Minister Matata Ponyo:

The United States of America values its good relationship with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and is proud to have provided assistance to your government as you continue to confront ongoing challenges. Please know that the people of the United States remain steadfast in their respect for and commitment to the people of the DRC. It is in this spirit of goodwill and respect that we, the undersigned Members of the United States Congress, write to ask for your help in resolving the over 460 adoption cases of Congolese children who either have been adopted or are in the process of being adopted by American families, yet who are unable to obtain exit permits due to a recent DRC suspension.

We understand that your Government has elected to suspend the issuance of exit letters due to concerns about the health and wellbeing of adopted children. We respect DRC's right, and indeed your obligation to ensure that international adoptions of Congolese children are conducted with integrity, transparency and the highest of ethics. As U.S. lawmakers, we share your desire to see that all children living in the United States, including those born in the DRC, are safe and secure. To this end, we would like to offer to support your government in its efforts to ensure that adopted Congolese children are safe and well-cared for and that future intercountry adoptions between our countries continue to be conducted in an ethical, transparent manner.

While we work together to ensure that all Congolese children are protected, we hope you will consider allowing the hundreds of American families who have legally completed the adoption process to move forward. The unexpected delay in the completion of these adoptions has resulted in over 460 children continuing to languish in institutions without a the care of a permanent family. As you know, long-term institutionalization has been proven to lead to neurological and emotional difficulties in children, as the lack of parental bonding damages brain development and a child's ability to form meaningful relationships with others.

In addition to the consequences for children, this suspension is also placing a substantial burden on the adoptive families. Approximately 50 of the 460 pending adoption cases are fully finalized—approved by Congolese courts, the Ministry of Gender and Family, and the United States Embassy in Kinshasa. The General Direction of Migration (DGM) has promised to consider applications for exit letters for completed adoption cases that had been approved by the Ministry of Gender and Family's Interministerial Adoption Committee before September 25, 2013. A number of families meeting that criterion are relying on the DGM's commitment to process their applications for exit permits. It is of great concern to us that these applications be completed as expeditiously as possible. Many

of these American families remain in Kinshasa, jeopardizing their careers and creating great financial difficulties. These families remain committed to the children they are adopting and desire to complete the process and return to the United States to raise these children in loving, caring homes.

More specifically, we respectfully request consideration of the following:

1. Allow for the expedited processing to completion of pending adoptions of children whose health is at risk.

2. Recommence exit permit issuance for families approved by the Ministry of Gender and Family's Interministerial Adoption Committee prior to September 25, 2013.

3. Provide the families who have finalized adoptions on or after September 25, 2013 with a means for obtaining exit permits.

We thank you for your immediate attention to this important matter. We look forward to working with your Government to ensure both the continuation of international adoptions and the strengthening of our international adoption process. The children involved deserve nothing less.

With sincere respect,

Senator Mary Landrieu
Co-Chair, Congressional Coalition on Adoption

Senator James Inhofe
Co-Chair, Congressional Coalition on Adoption

Representative Michele Bachmann
Co-Chair, Congressional Coalition on Adoption

Representative Karen Bass
Co-Chair, Congressional Coalition on Adoption

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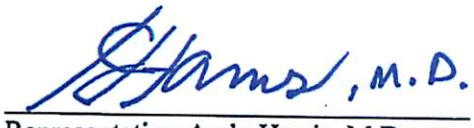

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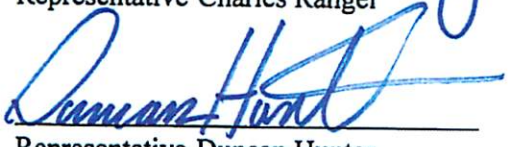

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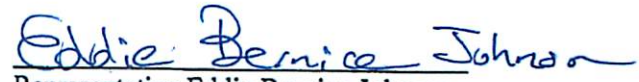

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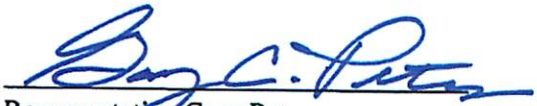

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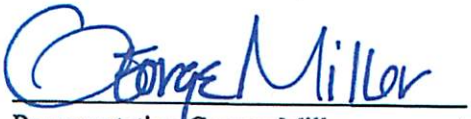

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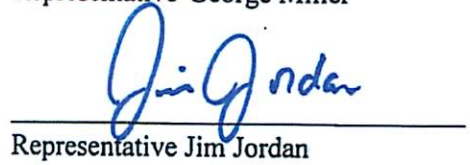

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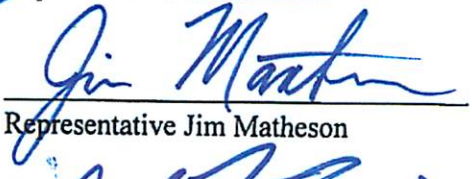

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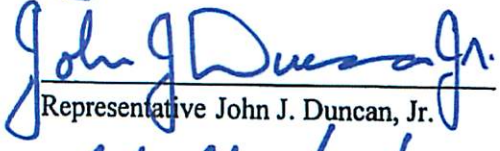

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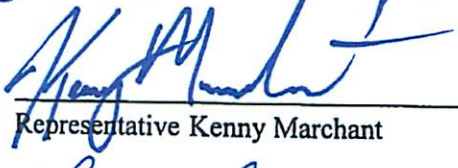

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