

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2015

President Juan Manuel Santos
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear President Santos,

We write to express our support for your recent announcement upholding the recommendation issued on April 27th by Minister of Health Alejandro Gaviria that calls for the immediate suspension of aerial fumigation of coca crops in Colombia. Given the demonstrated health and environmental consequences of fumigation, as well as its ineffectiveness as a method of eradicating illicit crops, we hope that the government of Colombia will act swiftly to implement this decision and ground all fumigation planes in the country.

First and foremost, aerial fumigation has not been correlated with a decline in overall coca production in Colombia. Analysis has shown that the efficacy of aerial fumigation campaigns has been very low; while coca cultivation has declined in Colombia over time, the decline did not begin until after fumigation was scaled back.

In addition, the negative health effects of fumigation have been recognized for many years; these include skin problems, respiratory issues, gastrointestinal damage, mental health disorders, miscarriages, and fetal deformations. Many of us that have had the opportunity to visit to Colombia have heard firsthand testimony from individuals whose health has been adversely affected by aerial fumigation.

The environmental impacts of fumigation are also substantial. Pesticides sprayed from planes seep into the ground, contaminating the soil and groundwater sources. While spraying is meant to target only illicit crops, damage to the surrounding area is inevitable. This damage is particularly concerning given that fumigation occurs in some of Colombia's most biodiverse and ecologically vibrant regions.

It is worth noting that fumigation is disproportionately affecting already-marginalized communities, especially Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. These communities lack the resources and government services to effectively address the health and environmental side effects of fumigation. The inadvertent destruction of legal crops presents another challenge; rural communities face unnecessary hunger when their crops are unintentionally destroyed by pesticides. As a result, fumigation often has the unfortunate effect of damaging the government's credibility in areas in which it has little presence.

We share your commitment to working toward a peaceful and prosperous Colombia, and we commend you on the substantial steps that your government has taken thus far to achieve those goals. We also understand the need to tackle the complex and deep-rooted issues of illicit

crop cultivation and drug trafficking. However, given the above, we do not believe that aerial fumigation represents a viable strategy to do so.

As a result, we were pleased to see the Minister Gaviria's recommendation calling for the immediate suspension of aerial fumigation of crops. We encourage the government of Colombia to implement the suspension without delay and to seize this opportunity to move toward rights-respecting, development-focused policies, including alternative crop incentives, local capacity building, and voluntary manual eradication.

We thank you in advance for your attention, and we look forward to hearing from you.

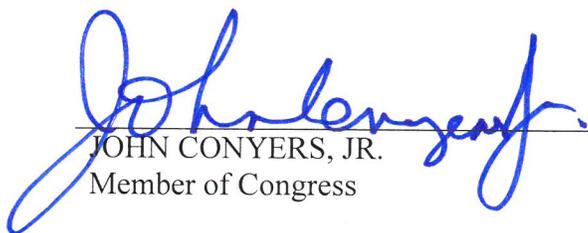
Sincerely,



SAM FARR
Member of Congress



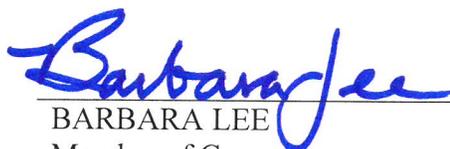
JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress



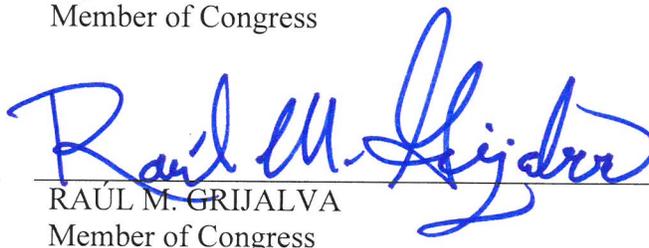
JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Member of Congress



KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress



BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



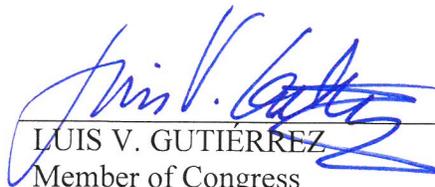
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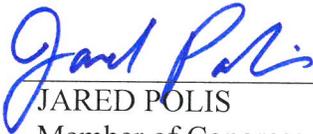
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LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress



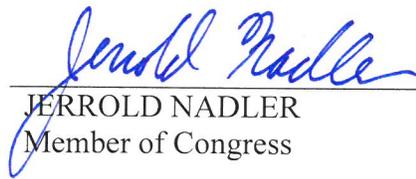
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Member of Congress



JARED POLIS
Member of Congress



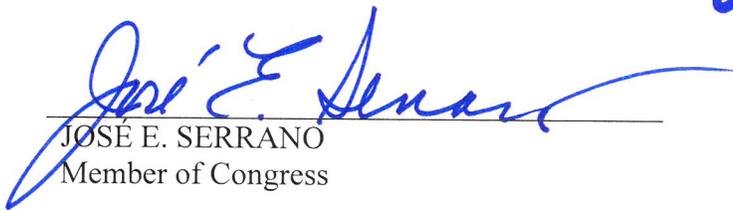
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