

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2019

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

Today, we write to show our strong support of your recent decision to grant the exception requested by South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster, on behalf of Miracle Hill Ministries, and all others who want to provide foster care services based on their faith. By honoring this request, you have protected faith-based agencies, with sincerely held religious beliefs, and allowed these organizations to continue serving children in our already overburdened foster care system.

Miracle Hill Ministries (Miracle Hill) is South Carolina's oldest and largest provider of foster families for foster children without significant special needs. It is one of twenty child placement agencies in the state, eleven of which have a religious affiliation. Due to Miracle Hill's firmly held beliefs, they require foster parents share their faith, in order to place a child in their care. However, not all of South Carolina's providers share this requirement. By exempting Miracle Hill from the misguided Obama-era regulations, you have protected their conscience rights and constitutional rights, allowing Miracle Hill to continue helping foster children in South Carolina. HHS's exemption also continues to provide prospective South Carolina foster parents with an array of providers.

Unfortunately, this situation is not isolated to Miracle Hill. Across the nation, faith-based agencies are providing vital foster care services to more than 400,000 children in the foster care system. Many faith-based agencies are being prevented from assisting these children because of their deeply held convictions. These agencies should be allowed to serve both foster parents and children in a way that reflects their religious beliefs. There are many avenues to become a foster parent, and couples have the opportunity to work with state agencies and organizations that do not have religious affiliations.

It is our hope that you will continue to protect faith-based organizations and their ability to place children with foster families, especially given the crisis our country is facing with the number of children needing stable and secure homes. Although each request for an exemption is analyzed on a case-by-case basis, we are appreciative of the positive precedent that has been set by your decision, and we are confident that you will continue to safeguard religious liberties and grant

exemptions to appropriate faith-based agencies. Exempting Miracle Hill from the previous Administration's regulations, which threatened to close faith-based child placement agencies, is a step toward protecting these vital agencies and their religious beliefs.

Ultimately, we urge you to ensure that HHS funds are not being used to prevent qualified faith-based agencies from providing foster services. As such, we encourage you to issue regulations more consistent with current law to address these misguided Obama-era regulations. Such regulation would allow the children in our foster care system to be served by all organizations and increase the opportunity for children to be placed with foster families.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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U.S. Senator



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U.S. Senator



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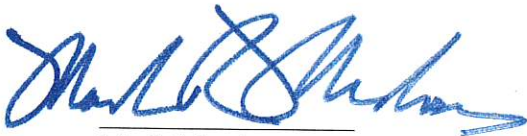
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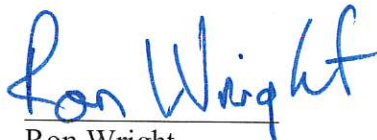
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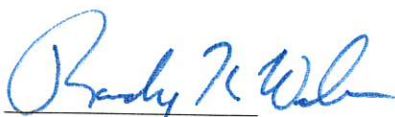
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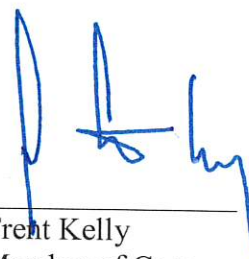
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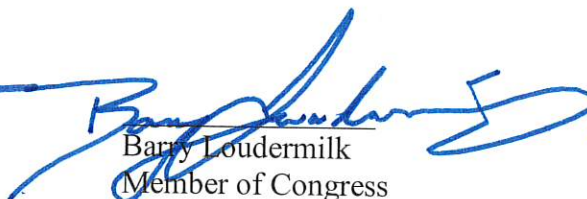
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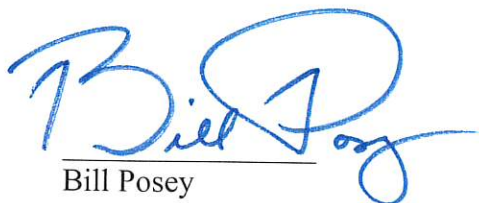
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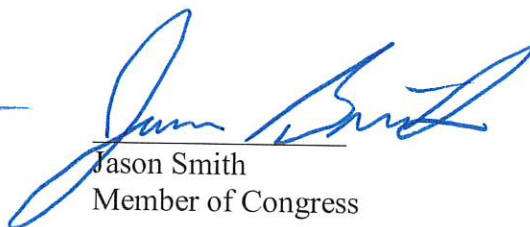
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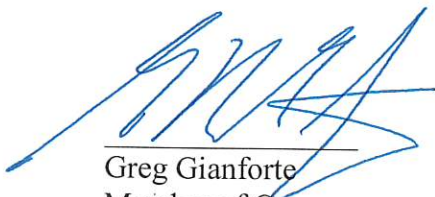
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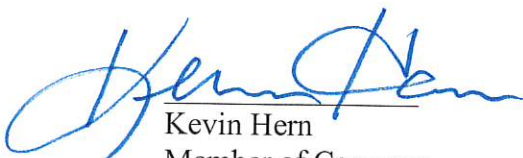
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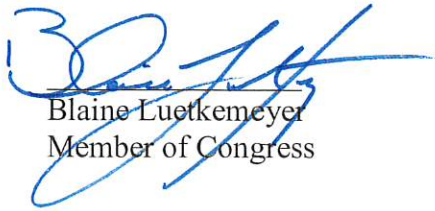
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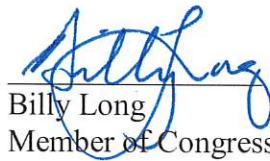
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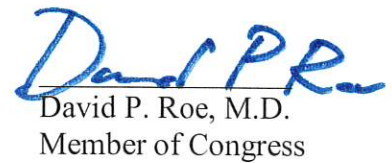
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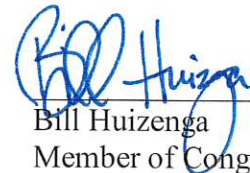
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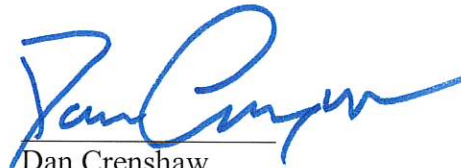
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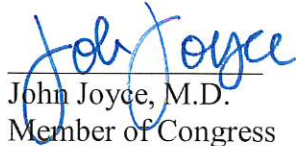
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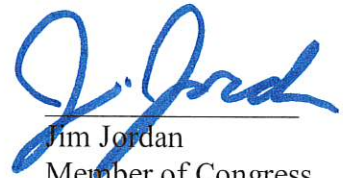
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