

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 15, 2015

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We write to express our deep concern regarding reports that critical background information of individuals participating in American visa programs has been largely omitted from the visa security screening process.

According to recent reports, the female assailant involved in the San Bernardino terrorist attack may have expressed radical jihadist sentiments on social media platforms before her U.S. citizen fiancé, the male attacker, applied for a K-1 fiancé visa on her behalf. Media reports have also indicated that Department of Homeland Security officials are able to conduct social media background checks as a part of certain immigration programs, but are doing so inconsistently. We believe these checks, focused on possible connections to terrorist activity, should be incorporated into DHS's vetting process for visa determinations, and that this policy should be implemented as soon as possible.

Therefore, we request that you provide the following information so that we may work with you to implement a more rigorous screening process:

- Do you plan to integrate social media background checks into the screening process for all visas?
- Do you face resource and/or technical barriers to implementing these background checks? If so, please describe them.
- Does the Administration conduct social media background checks in any of the existing screening processes for visa programs? If so, please describe how they are conducted.

Ensuring that the screening processes for our nation's visa programs are rigorous and comprehensive must be a top priority, as these programs are critical to our security, our economy, and for our bilateral relationships with nations around the world.

We look forward to working with you to establish a more robust social media background check process for all visitors and immigrants to the United States.

Sincerely,



Senator Jeanne Shaheen



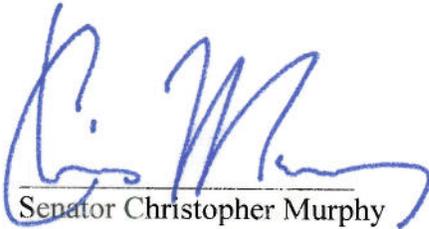
Senator Charles E. Schumer



Senator Barbara A. Mikulski



Senator Richard Blumenthal



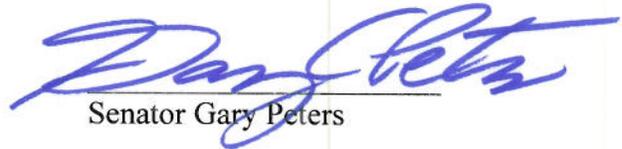
Senator Christopher Murphy



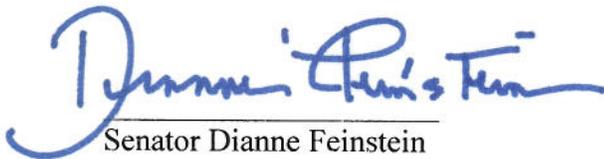
Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand



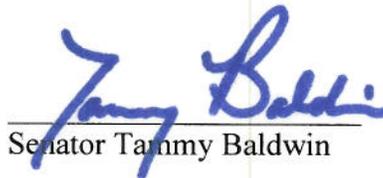
Senator Amy Klobuchar



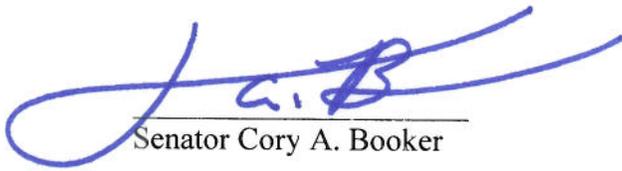
Senator Gary Peters



Senator Dianne Feinstein



Senator Tammy Baldwin



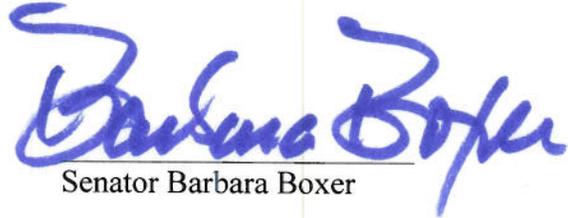
Senator Cory A. Booker



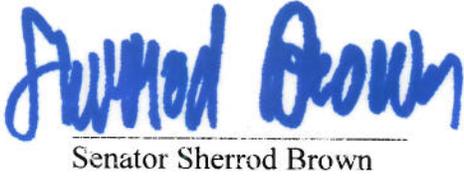
Senator Heidi Heitkamp



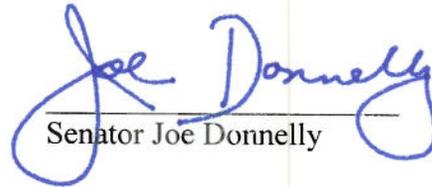
Senator Michael F. Bennet



Senator Barbara Boxer



Senator Sherrod Brown



Senator Joe Donnelly



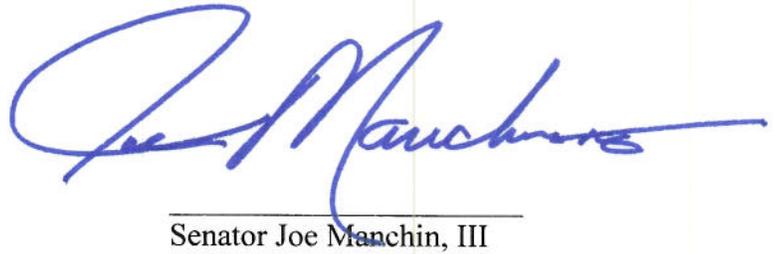
Senator Martin Heinrich



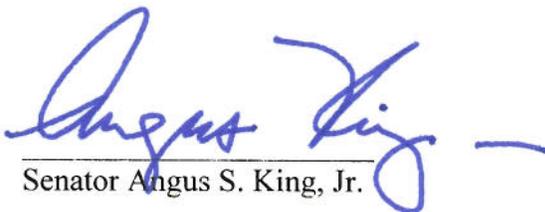
Senator Jeff Merkley



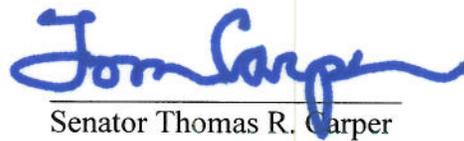
Senator Mazie K. Hirono



Senator Joe Manchin, III



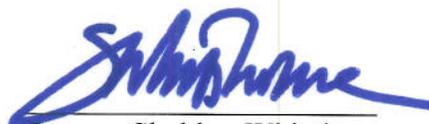
Senator Angus S. King, Jr.



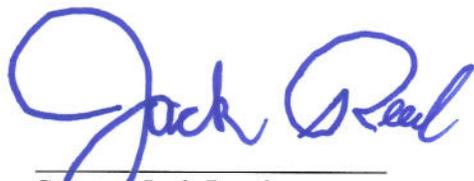
Senator Thomas R. Carper



Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.



Senator Sheldon Whitehouse



Senator Jack Reed

CC: The Honorable John F. Kerry, Secretary, U.S. Department of State