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Congress of the United States **House of Representatives**

December 16, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader-Elect
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader McConnell, Leader Pelosi and Minority Leader-Elect Schumer:

In light of Russian President Vladimir Putin's continued meddling and aggression around the globe, I encourage you to prioritize our national security in the 115th Congress. One of the first items of business the Congress must consider next year is legislation to further tighten economic sanctions against Russia. Earlier this year, the House of Representatives unanimously passed the STAND for Ukraine Act to contain, reverse, and deter Russian aggression in Ukraine; support the sovereignty of Crimea against Russia's illegal annexation; and ultimately assist Ukraine's democratic transition. Advancing this bill would be an important show of American strength.

President Putin's attempts to undermine global stability are boundless. Russia has cultivated networks of patronage across Central and Eastern Europe in order to influence and direct decision-making to serve the Kremlin's interests. Russia has continued to violate Ukrainian sovereignty by providing aid to separatists who attack Ukrainian military positions in Donetsk and Donbass, resulting in civilian casualties. In a similar vein, Russia continues to support the Syrian Government through its supply of ammunition and weapons, as well as its efforts to destroy opposition-controlled population zones and civilian infrastructure. The clear intent of these actions is to preserve Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his regime. Finally, U.S. intelligence clearly demonstrates that the Russian Government directed an extensive breach of e-mails from U.S. citizens and institutions, including U.S. political organizations, during our election. These actions threaten our democratic institutions, national security, and sovereignty – and warrant a swift, strong response.

As you know, the current sanctions on Russia were implemented in 2014 through executive orders relating to its actions in Ukraine. These sanctions serve as an important tool to ensure Russia abandons its oppression at home and aggression abroad, which is why I am so concerned that they could be easily undone with the stroke of a pen by a future administration. The United States must send a clear message that we will not stand idly by as President Putin bullies his

neighbors, tests the commitment of NATO, and works to fracture Western democracies. That is why it is critical for the Congress to pass the STAND for Ukraine Act.

The STAND for Ukraine Act would codify the 2014 sanctions levied against Russia through executive orders into U.S. law, making it more difficult for future administrations to unravel our efforts to deter President Putin's aggression and disrespect for global order. This legislation builds on existing sanctions and sends a clear signal to Russia about the U.S.'s commitment to this policy, just as we did during the Soviet Union's decades-long occupation of the Baltic States. Maintaining strict sanctions on Russia until it abandons its oppression at home and aggression abroad has always been a source of bipartisan support, evidenced by the strong bipartisan passage of every piece of legislation ramping up Russian sanctions. Now, more than ever, it is critical the United States stand up to President Putin by sending a clear message that Russia's aggression will not be tolerated.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

Cc: Barack Obama, President of the United States of America
Donald Trump, President-elect of the United States of America