April 4, 2017

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
H-310 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable José Serrano
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Carter
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security
2006 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson, Ranking Member Serrano, Chairman Carter, and Ranking Member Roybal-Allard:

As you begin work on fiscal year 2018 appropriations legislation for both Commerce, Justice, and Science as well as Homeland Security, we urge you to give the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) the authority to prohibit suspected terrorists from purchasing firearms and explosives by closing a gaping loophole in our nation’s homeland security.

Federal law currently designates nine broad categories of people as dangerous enough to bar them from purchasing or owning firearms. Astonishingly, suspected terrorists on the FBI Terrorist Watchlist are not one of those categories. Quite simply, this means that an individual can be considered such a substantial threat to the national security of the United States that the FBI prohibits them from boarding a plane, yet they still have the ability to easily and legally purchase a semiautomatic weapon.

From the terror attacks in Paris, San Bernardino and Charleston in 2015 to Orlando in 2016 and Kansas City in 2017, terrorists both foreign and domestic are increasingly using firearms to carry out their attacks. Congress has a responsibility to do all it can to keep firearms out of the hands of terrorists. A recent Government Accountability Office investigation found that individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist attempted to purchase guns from American dealers at least 2,233 times between 2004 and 2014, and they were successful in 2,043 or 91% of those times.

The American people, gun owning and not, overwhelmingly support responsible, common-sense gun safety reforms. This policy change, first proposed by President George W. Bush’s administration, is the definition of a responsible, common-sense reform. A 2013 survey found that 80% of non-NRA gun owners and 71% of NRA gun owners support prohibiting people on the Terrorist Watchlist from obtaining guns.
Closing this loophole is a simple, responsible, and straightforward public safety measure. We urge you to seize on this critical opportunity to protect the American people and the national security of the United States. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

David Price  
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer, Jr.  
Member of Congress
Val Butler Demings
Member of Congress

Ruben J. Kihuen
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress