

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 08, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We would like to thank you for your increased commitment to addressing the public health threat posed by antibiotic resistant disease, including foodborne pathogens. In particular we want to commend the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for their recent agreement to begin addressing the overuse of antibiotics for non-therapeutic purposes in livestock production. We also respectfully request that you direct the FDA to ban non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in livestock production.

As you know, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that antibiotic resistance is one of the world's most pressing public health problems. Antibiotics are the miracle drugs of the 20th century, yet overuse leads to development of resistant bacteria. An estimated 70 percent of all antibiotics used in this country are fed to farm animals for non-therapeutic purposes, principally to keep them from becoming sick when they are raised in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. With simple, common sense and inexpensive improvements to animal husbandry practices, it would not be necessary to give animals routine and large volumes of antibiotics.

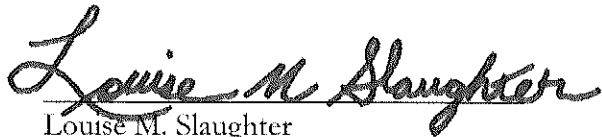
Addressing this critical issue is not only important for protecting the public's health, but also for ensuring that United States livestock producers remain competitive in international markets. The European Union, New Zealand, Thailand, and Korea all have either banned or will begin banning antibiotic growth promoters in animal feed. Under World Trade Organization rules, trading partners who implement this ban will have the right to refuse imports that do not meet this standard. Consequently, if the United States continues to allow non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in livestock, there could be very serious trade and economic implications.

On July 13, in a statement before the House Committee on Rules, FDA Deputy Commissioner Joshua Sharfstein assured the committee that the FDA is committed to curbing such uses, that FDA believes using antibiotics for growth promotion purposes should be banned, and that that other livestock uses of these drugs should be carried out under the supervision of a veterinarian. After decades of inaction, we are very pleased that the FDA is now taking a strong stance on this urgent issue.

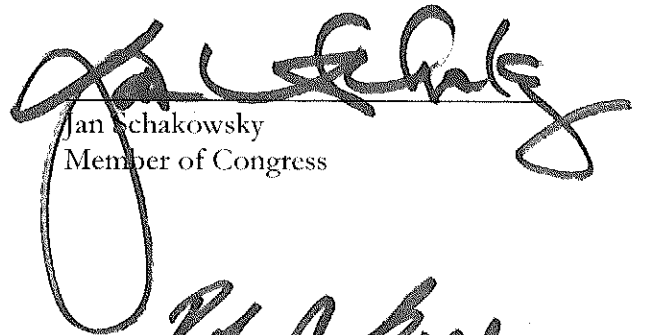
At the same time, both the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner have indicated that FDA's process to review such uses of drugs is cumbersome and that legislation may be needed to address this issue more quickly. That said, we urge you to work with Congress to support the passage of H.R. 1549, the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act. We look forward to your support in passing this critical legislation.

Thank you again for your commitment to addressing this critical public health and food safety issue.

Sincerely,



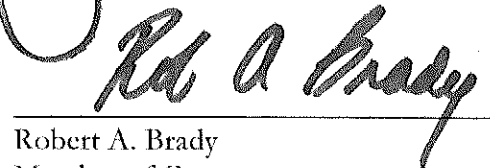
Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



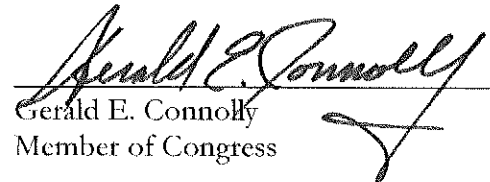
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress



Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



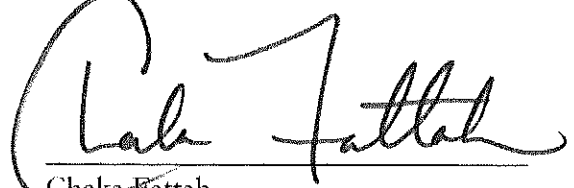
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



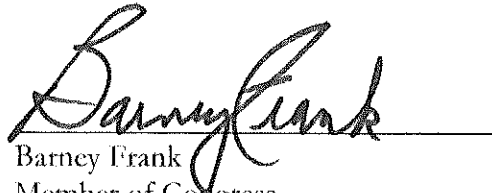
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress



Barney Frank
Member of Congress



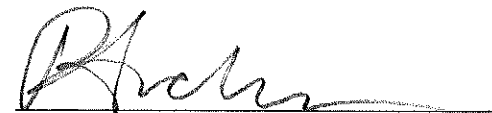
Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



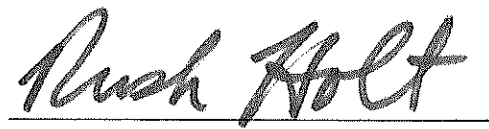
Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress



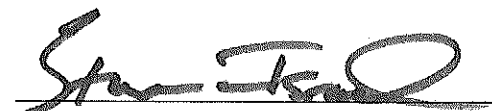
Mazie Hirono
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Paul W. Hodes
Member of Congress



Rush Holt
Member of Congress



Steve Israel
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Jess L. Jackson, Jr.
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Patrick J. Kennedy
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Mary Jo Kilroy
Member of Congress

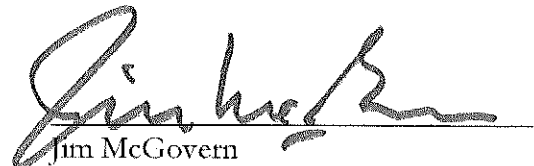

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress

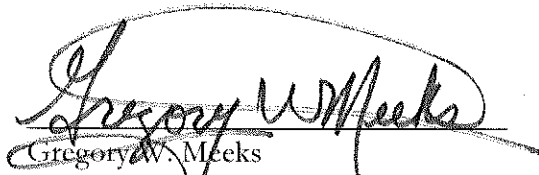

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

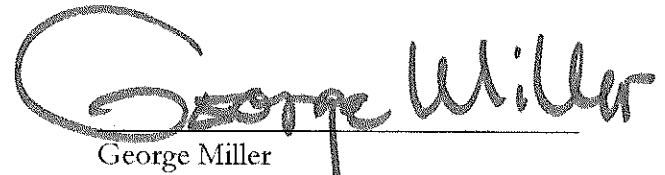

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress


Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress

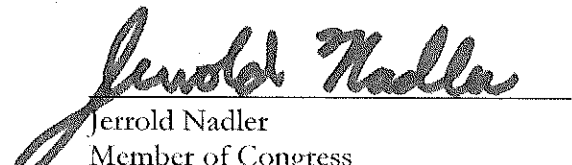

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Jim McGovern
Member of Congress

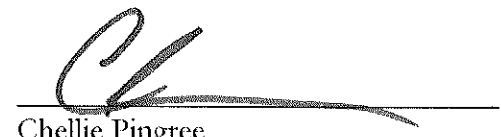

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

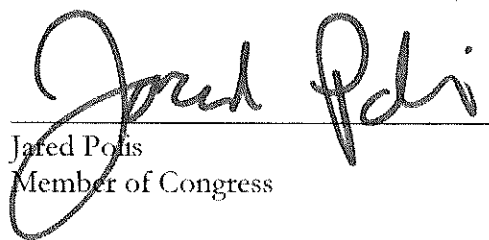

George Miller
Member of Congress


James P. Moran
Member of Congress

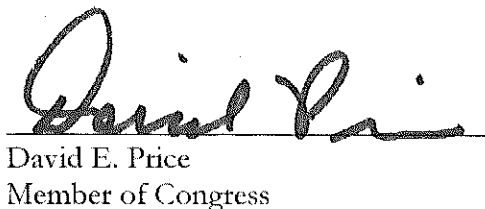

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress


Donald Payne
Member of Congress

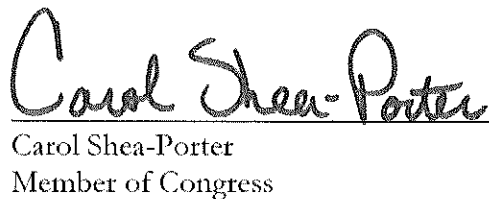

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



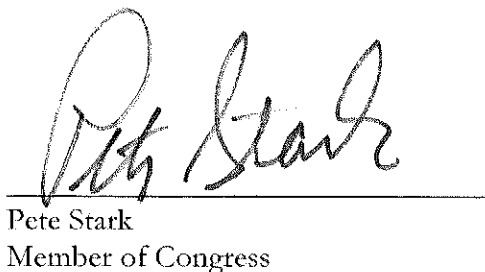
Jared Polis
Member of Congress



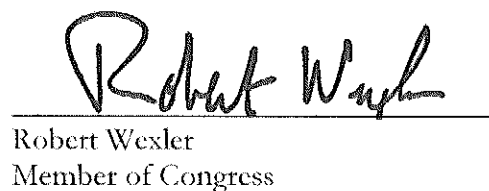
David E. Price
Member of Congress



Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress



Pete Stark
Member of Congress



Robert Wexler
Member of Congress

cc: Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D., Commissioner of Food and Drugs
Valerie B. Jarrett, Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental
Affairs and Public Engagement