August 16, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We note our significant concern with reports of the Administration’s plan to propose a rescission of up to $4.3 billion in funding from the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Not only do these cuts have the potential to undermine significant national security and anti-terrorism efforts of our diplomats and international partners overseas, but we fear such a rescission package could complicate the ability of the Administration and Congress to work constructively on future appropriations deals.

First and notably, we share your concern about our mounting national debt, which in itself creates security risks to the country. However, it has been reported that this proposal makes sweeping and indiscriminate cuts without regard to national security impacts. These resources support a number of Administration and bipartisan Congressional priorities, including development assistance, resources for counternarcotics initiatives, and efforts to counter Kremlin and Chinese malign influence. At a time when threats from Iran are increasing, ISIS has not been vanquished, the Administration is putting significant pressure on the regime in Venezuela, and aiming to curtail the North Korea nuclear program, the rescission package is particularly concerning. A move to rescind funding absent policy input from the Department of State and USAID only undermines our national security interests and emboldens our adversaries. We strongly urge you to reconsider this approach.

Second, we supported the budget deal and did so in good faith. Preventing agencies from obligating such large sums seems an abdication of this bipartisan agreement, and Congress thus expressed strong opposition to this precise exercise last year. Furthermore, the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s December 2018 legal opinion concluded that the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act does not permit the withholding of funds through their date of expiration and notes the President’s responsibility in ensuring prudent obligation of funds.

We are happy to work with you to ensure that our foreign assistance is targeted in the most appropriate way. However, we discourage you from submitting this rescission package in the strongest possible terms.

Sincerely,

Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator  

Hal Rogers  
Member of Congress

CC:  Mr. Mick Mulvaney, Acting Chief of Staff, The White House  
Mr. Russell Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget