Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for being a strong advocate on behalf of the women that comprise half of our country’s workforce and for your efforts on behalf of the women who make up more than 43.5 percent of federal personnel. While some progress has been made to ensure equal opportunities in the federal workforce, regardless of gender, there is more work to do. That is why we urge you to update the guidelines of, and ensure that all federal agencies comply with, the Federal Women’s Program (FWP), an important program that supports women in the federal workforce that is currently not being utilized.

In 1967, Executive Order 11375 added sex to other prohibited forms of discrimination in the federal workforce. Subsequently, OPM established the FWP, which was later integrated into the EEO Program, to focus on employment support for women in the federal workforce.

As a result, women and men have near-equal chances of being hired at entry-level and mid-level positions, but when it comes to higher level ascension, there remains gap in advancement. Women hold only 32% of Senior Executive Service positions, and approximately 38% percent of higher level GS-14 and GS-15 positions, the top pay grades in the federal government.

In order to increase the number of women in the Senior Executive Service and other senior federal positions, women must have access to mentors and recruiting opportunities. The primary focus of FWP is to address these employment needs, such as recruitment and promotion, training and education, retention and career counseling, as well as barriers, such as sex discrimination and harassment, to women as they relate to federal employment policies, practices and related initiatives. FWP Managers are federal employees who provide a point of contact for all women in the agency for gender discrimination questions and advise management on the status and progress of the program and the concerns of women in their federal division.

Unfortunately, the staff assigned to manage the program has been severely reduced, resulting in the virtual disappearance of an effective FWP across the federal government.
Reinstitutioning this program will help hard-working federally employed women to gain positions in all areas of federal service.

We request that the Administration issue a revised Executive Order and detailed instructional memorandum to all agencies, helping to ensure that all are complying with this enacted law and working towards reinvigorating the programs within their agency.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and your work to make the government a more diverse employer.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY  
Member of Congress

LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER  
Member of Congress

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
Member of Congress

GERALD E. CONNOLLY  
Member of Congress

WILLIAM LACY CLAY  
Member of Congress

SUZANNE BONAMICI  
Member of Congress

JULIA BROWNLEY  
Member of Congress

DONNA F. EDWARDS  
Member of Congress

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM  
Member of Congress

MIKE COFFMANN  
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CAROL SHEA-PORTEER  
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BRIAN HIGGINS  
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DIANA DEGETTE  
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MARCY KAPTUR  
Member of Congress