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COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET  
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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0919

March 10, 2022

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Joseph R. Biden  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Anthony J. Blinken  
Secretary  
Department of State  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear President Biden and Secretary Blinken:

Over the past two weeks, the world has watched in horror and anger as an unhinged Vladimir Putin invades the country of Ukraine. In the face of a massive incursion, the Ukrainian people have refused to back down, and we reaffirm our unwavering support of their righteous fight for freedom.

Amidst this bloody and destabilizing war, the U.S. Department of State advised all Americans to leave the country immediately and avoid traveling to Russia during this perilous time. While many heeded this advice, some face the devastating consequences of failing to adhere to this guidance. While it is unfortunate for any American to fall victim to poor decision-making, it is incumbent upon the U.S. government to ensure no man is left behind—especially in a war-torn nation like Russia.

Today, we write to you regarding the unfortunate case of Women's National Basketball Association (W.N.B.A) star Center Brittney Griner who remains in a Russian prison for violating the country's illegal substance laws. Every American—regardless of their race, gender, or socioeconomic status—must adhere to the rules of every sovereign nation. While we are not here to call balls and strikes on Russian law, we are very concerned about Mrs. Griner's detention under the current and rapidly deteriorating circumstances in Russia and Eastern Europe.

While Mrs. Griner made a grave mistake, we condemn the Russian government's utilization of her as a pawn to further their ruthless and sick goal of fulfilling the reincarnation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). We call upon your administration to look Putin in the eyes and send a clear message to the Kremlin that America will not tolerate Putin using Americans as his pawn during this treacherous and bleak moment in world history. Putin's unprovoked and murderous attack on Ukraine is a slap in the face to the Western world, and it is time that the United States stands up to this bully. Mrs. Griner has proudly represented our country here at home and on the world stage, becoming one of the few W.N.B.A players to win a college championship, W.N.B.A and Euroleague titles, and an Olympic gold medal—and we urge the safe return of Mrs. Griner and any other Americans detained in Putin's hellhole of a country.

In closing, it is more apparent than ever that actions have consequences, but no American should fall hostage to a heinous and deranged dictator. As Ukraine continues to fight for its freedom valiantly, the United States of America must send a message to the world that freedom must always prevail and that no American will be left behind. We pray for Ukraine and the safe return of Brittney Griner.

Sincerely,



Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress



Burgess Owens  
Member of Congress