April 1, 2019

The Honorable José Serrano
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science, and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science, and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Serrano and Ranking Member Aderholt,

As you consider Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriations, we ask for your support to provide $2 million for the Missing Americans Alert Program as authorized under Kevin and Avonte’s Law, Division Q of P.L. 115-141.

It is estimated that more than 60 percent of those living with Alzheimer’s or other dementias will wander, and up to half of those who do wander will suffer serious injury or death if not found within 24 hours. One in three children with autism and one in four children with intellectual disabilities wander each year. Nearly a third of reported autism related wandering cases are fatal or require some level of medical attention. This bill is named in honor of two boys with autism, Kevin Curtis Wills and Avonte Oquendo, who both wandered from safety and tragically drowned.

The Missing Americans Alert Program provides competitive grants to promote initiatives that would reduce the risk of injury and death related to individuals with Alzheimer’s and disabilities who wander. Specifically, the program makes resources available to provide education and training to families, school personnel, clinicians and other community organizations to put in place protocols to prevent wandering and respond rapidly in the case of a wandering incident. The funds can also be used by law enforcement to train first responders to assist in their ability to recognize signs of developmental disability and dementia upon locating an individual and to provide state of the art technology for first responders to assist them in locating vulnerable missing individuals. When a vulnerable child or adult with advanced dementia wander, every minute counts.

This program enjoys broad support, including from the National Autism Association, the Alzheimer’s Association, the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America, the National Down Syndrome Society, Autism Speaks, and the American Psychological Association.

We urge your support for the Missing Americans Alert Program as authorized by Kevin and Avonte’s Law in the Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations process. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.
Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress

MIKE DOYLE  
Member of Congress

MAXINE WATERS  
Member of Congress

DANNY K. DAVIS  
Member of Congress

TED DEUTCH  
Member of Congress

PETER T. KING  
Member of Congress

SCOTT H. PETERS  
Member of Congress

JOHN GARAMENDI  
Member of Congress

BRIAN FITZPATRICK  
Member of Congress

MICHAEL F. T. SAK NICOLAS  
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ANN MCLANE KUSTER  
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NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ  
Member of Congress

JOHN B. LARSON  
Member of Congress

ANTONIO R. DELGADO  
Member of Congress

RAUL M. GRIJALVA  
Member of Congress