

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

As you work to complete negotiations on a year-end spending package, we write to ask for your support for an issue critical to our districts – namely, responding to the crumbling foundations crisis. Right now, central and northeastern Connecticut are struggling to address widespread deterioration in home foundations due to the presence of a mineral known as pyrrhotite. There have been reported cases in Massachusetts as well.

We have been working diligently to explore all avenues on the local, state and federal levels to respond to the crisis and give homeowners and communities in our districts the tools they need to respond.

To this end, during the July 2018 consideration of the House Interior and Financial Services and General Government Appropriations “minibus”, we introduced two amendments to address this issue. We are proud that both these proposals earned bipartisan support in the House, as well as in the Senate. We ask that these amendments be retained in the final text of any FY2019 Omnibus package.

The first amendment we introduced, H.Amdt.881 to H.R. 6147, would provide \$100,000 in funding for the U.S. Geological Survey to develop a map showing pyrrhotite occurrences throughout the United States. Given the lack of knowledge about where pyrrhotite may be in the United States, and its high prevalence in certain parts of Canada, it is essential that the U.S. Geological Survey understand where quarries containing pyrrhotite exist. Knowing this will prevent home-builders, contractors, and developers from procuring rock from quarries in which pyrrhotite is present, preventing home foundations, bridges, roads, and other concrete structures from being poured with this dangerous mineral. This amendment could save millions of dollars down the road – and would prevent the need for additional expenditure of taxpayer dollars to remediate properties. Our amendment passed the House on July 17, 2018 and a similar amendment passed the Senate on July 31st.

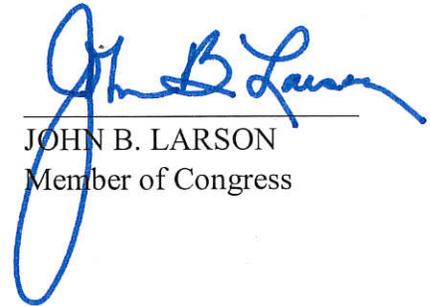
A second amendment that we offered, H.Amdt.934, would direct \$100,000 to a study led by the Department of the Treasury and relevant regulators on the financial impact of a home foundation containing pyrrhotite for homeowners with this problem. The study would be required to provide recommendations on regulatory and legislative actions needed to help mitigate the impact of crumbling foundations on banks, mortgage lenders, tax revenues, and homeowners. This amendment grew naturally out of months-long correspondence between our offices and financial regulators. We continue to work with the Federal Housing Finance Authority, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and other financial regulators to understand how homeowners with crumbling foundations – and the financial institutions providing them with loans or mortgages – can best address this crisis. Our amendment passed unanimously in the House on July 18, 2018 and a similar amendment that assigns the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct the review, passed the Senate on July 31st.

Given the strong support these measures have received in both the House and the Senate, we ask that the final spending package retain these important provisions for our districts. We appreciate the support that House and Senate leadership have shown for these provisions in the past, and we look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue moving forward.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress