

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 23, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger:

As you work to complete negotiations on a year-end spending package, we write to ask for your support for an issue critical to Connecticut and Massachusetts – the crumbling foundations crisis. Right now, homeowners and condominium owners in central and northeastern Connecticut, as well as in bordering towns in Massachusetts, are struggling to address widespread deterioration in home foundations due to the presence of a mineral known as pyrrhotite. For many years, concrete made of aggregate containing pyrrhotite from a quarry in Connecticut was used in the construction of homes, schools, condominiums and other structures in at least these two states.

Pyrrhotite reacts with oxygen and water and causes the concrete to lose its structural integrity. When poured into residential home foundations, the mineral may damage the foundation, rendering the entire home structurally unsound. The cracking of these foundations—and their ultimate collapse—can occur many years after the concrete was poured. Many homeowners will need to replace their entire foundation, the cost of which is not covered by most insurance policies. In addition, we believe that other structures are affected with this problem, including schools and potentially municipal buildings and bridges. Homeowners, business officials, and municipal officials are now testing concrete in their properties to learn whether it contains pyrrhotite and whether pyrrhotite could be causing structural issues for their property. More research is needed to ensure that this testing process is reliable and does not produce false negatives or false positives. In addition, research is urgently needed to understand what amount of pyrrhotite, and under what environmental conditions, can cause concrete to crack and become structurally unsound.

In Congress, we have worked diligently to explore all avenues on the local, state, and federal levels to respond to the crumbling foundations crisis and provide affected communities with every possible mode of federal assistance to respond to this issue. To this end, during the June 2019 consideration of the five-bill appropriations “minibus” for FY2020 (H.R. 3055), we introduced an amendment on this issue which passed by unanimous consent. Our amendment, No. 35 included in Division A of H.R. 3055, was cosponsored by every Member of the

Connecticut delegation and passed in En Bloc #2 (H.Amdt.392). Additionally, in the Senate Commerce, Justice, Science bill report language for FY2020, \$1.5 million was allocated towards pyrrhotite research at NIST. We appreciate the strong and bipartisan support for inclusion of this funding in both the House and Senate. However, as you work to finalize 2020 appropriations for the Department of Commerce and NIST, we ask for your support for retaining the \$4 million approved by the House.

The House amendment provides \$4 million for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to conduct research on the effects of the mineral pyrrhotite on concrete aggregate. NIST is the federal expert in cement and concrete standards and is the appropriate federal agency to do this work. Our amendment would require NIST to develop a cost-effective and standard testing method for at-risk homes and other structures for the presence of pyrrhotite. Our amendment also requires NIST to create a risk-rating scale, so that homeowners, businesses, and local governments can better understand what quantity of pyrrhotite, and under what conditions, poses a danger to concrete's structural integrity.

Knowing the legislative groundwork that has already gone into developing a NIST standard, NIST has already engaged with this work, and recently brought one of their preeminent concrete scientists, Paul Stutzman, up to Connecticut to understand the situation firsthand.

We would also like to make the Committee aware that the issue of pyrrhotite in concrete is not limited to New England states – it has caused serious problems in both Quebec and Ireland, and it is very possible that other states may be unknowingly using concrete aggregate containing pyrrhotite. To this end, Members of the Connecticut Congressional delegation worked with House and Senate appropriators to ensure that language was included in the FY2019 appropriations package that requires the United States Geological Survey to complete a map of the presence of pyrrhotite throughout the United States. This work, in tandem with research by NIST, will help ensure that other communities are equipped to face the challenges of this problem, and to prevent this mineral from being used in concrete aggregate moving forward.

We ask that the final spending package retain this important provision for our region, and fully fund NIST pyrrhotite research at \$4 million. We appreciate the support that House and Senate leadership have shown for crumbling foundations amendments in the past, and we look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue moving forward.

Sincerely,



JOHN B. LARSON  
Member of Congress



JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress



ROSA L. DELAURO  
Member of Congress



RICHARD E. NEAL  
Member of Congress



JIM HIMES  
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JAHANA HAYES  
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