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The Honorable Michael McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Relations Committee
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gregory Meeks
Ranking Member
House Foreign Relations Committee
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Meeks:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on initiatives I have before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Before that though, I would like to take a moment and thank the Members of this Committee and its staff for their hard work and dedication not only this year but this past month in particular. I am grateful to know that we have steady hands guiding the foreign policy of this body.

Today I am here to discuss multiple pieces of important legislation as well as provide an update on the Congressional Ethiopian Caucus. I have two pieces of legislation I would like to highlight H.R. 5233 *The Passport Modernization Act*, and H.R. 4977 the *Critical Mineral Access Act*.

My office, and I assume most other Members, has been absolutely inundated with passport assistance requests from our constituents. We estimate that our casework team will work on close to one thousand requests by the end of the calendar year 2023. My bill H.R. 5233, *The Passport Modernization Act*, will help alleviate some of this stress on our staff as well as modernize the outdated passport renewal process. Over the last few years, obtaining a passport to travel abroad has become increasingly cumbersome and time-consuming. This bill will give the Department of State more latitude to hire passport staff, as well as mandate reporting on critical modernizations such as an online passport renewal portal. Having an American passport is one of the greatest privileges on earth, and it should not have to take an act of Congress to get one. I am proud to have over twenty co-sponsors on this legislation, including some Members on this committee.

The last piece of legislation I would like to discuss is H.R. 4977, the *Critical Minerals Access Act* which was introduced with my good friend Mrs. Titus of Nevada. This bill will help U.S. companies invest in critical minerals and compete with China's growing influence in the industry. Specifically, the *Critical Mineral Access Act* would allow the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation to provide loans for companies to invest in global critical minerals projects, supporting U.S. companies that are attempting to compete with Chinese ownership of some of the world's largest and most promising critical minerals deposits. These resources are involved in every aspect of our daily lives from cell phones to military gear that aids our troops. It is vital that the United States lead the world in critical mineral manufacturing and not fall behind our adversaries.

To conclude my testimony here today, I would like to touch on the ongoing situation in Ethiopia. As one of four co-chairs for the Congressional Ethiopian Caucus, I find it important to continue discussions about the region. While I was pleased at the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities last year, we must ensure the terms of this agreement are fully implemented. The people of Ethiopia are suffering and the Government of Ethiopia is complicit in exacerbating this humanitarian crisis by disrupting the delivery of international food aid to the intended beneficiaries. Additionally, I would like to comment on Prime Minister Ahmed's recent trip to Beijing and the debt restructuring agreement that came as a result. This is concerning and I call on the current Administration to take a coordinated approach to Ethiopia policy and stand firm against a China-led world order. I hope that the Subcommittee on Africa's hearing with the State Department at the end of this month produces a cohesive policy plan for Ethiopia to deliver to Congress.

I thank the Committee for their time. My staff and I stand ready to answer questions you may have and to advance the legislation that I have discussed.

Sincerely,



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter

Member of Congress GA-01