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February 14, 2017

Hon. Bob Corker, Chairman  
Hon. Ben Cardin, Ranking Member  
Members of the U.S. Senate Committee  
on Foreign Relations  
Washington, DC

Dear Senators,

We write to you on behalf of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America ("Orthodox Union") with regard to the United States Senate's consideration of David Friedman to be the U.S. Ambassador to Israel.

The Orthodox Union is the nation's largest Orthodox Jewish umbrella organization representing nearly 1,000 congregations nationwide. As a nonpartisan religious organization, it is our practice not to endorse or oppose a president's nominees before the Senate for confirmation. However, we wish to express our view to the Senate with regard to several issues that have arisen in connection with Mr. Friedman's nomination.

A campaign has been launched to portray Mr. Friedman's skeptical views toward the "two state solution" - as the means of resolving the Israeli - Palestinian conflict -- as extreme and even beyond the pale of mainstream thought. This campaign has been launched by several liberal activist organizations, editorial columnists and even a few Members of Congress. We would not deny that these organizations represent the views of many American Jews and others who indeed believe in the "peace process" and "two state solution" as the preferred means of resolving the conflict. But there is also no denying that many American Jews -- certainly in the Orthodox Union's constituency -- and other pro-Israel Americans share Mr. Friedman's deep skepticism toward this decades-old approach which has been tried and tested and failed repeatedly to deliver security and peace to the people of Israel, the Palestinians and the region.

Indeed, we are compelled to note that in its eight year tenure, the Obama Administration tried aggressively to pursue a "two state solution" to no avail. It is the view of millions of pro-Israel Americans - including most of the Orthodox Union's constituents -- that this result is primarily due to the Palestinians' persistent rejectionism. The Palestinians repeatedly, and through their official organs,

deny the historic connection of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and their refusal to recognize the legitimacy of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people.

In light of this recent history, many pro-Israel Americans, who share the ultimate goal of achieving security and peace for all in the Mideast, view the model of the peace process pursued by past administrations as stale and illusory. These Americans support a new approach to how the United States will engage with this important aspect of American foreign policy.

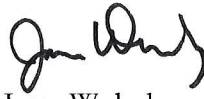
No doubt, reasonable and well-meaning people can debate these points and rightly claim they are representing many constituents who subscribe to one side of the debate. But it is wrong to assert, in this context, that the other side's views are extreme and beyond the pale.

We urge you to take our perspective into account as you consider Mr. Friedman's nomination.

Sincerely,



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