

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 26, 2024

Irakli Kobakhidze
Prime Minister of Georgia
7 Ingorokva Street
State Chancellery
Tbilisi, Georgia

Dear Prime Minister Kobakhidze,

As longstanding friends of Georgia, we are compelled to express our profound concern regarding your government's decision to re-introduce and advance a Russian-style foreign agents law. As you know, the United States has a deep and close relationship with Georgia and its people. We have long supported Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and right to free itself from Russian occupation. We also recognize that Georgia continues to face a number of challenges from Russia, such as extensive malign influence, disinformation campaigns ahead of your national elections and ongoing hybrid warfare.

However, we are increasingly concerned that Georgia's transatlantic aspirations are being actively undermined. Specifically, we are disappointed that the ruling party reintroduced this legislation in Parliament in March, only a year after the Parliament's decision to rescind the legislation in response to mass, large-scale protests. This legislation targets civil society, the lifeblood of Georgian democracy, and appears directed at assistance from the United States and Europe, which have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to support Georgia's sovereignty and democratic transition since its secession from the Soviet Union in 1991.

The legislation contradicts the wishes of the Georgian people, given that 79 percent of Georgians consistently support European Union (EU) membership. This support is etched in Georgia's constitution and has been a policy goal of the Georgian government for decades. The EU has stated clearly that this legislation is at odds with EU norms and values and will impact your country's membership path. The effort to advance this bill also disregards the repeated demonstrations by tens of thousands of Georgians, both in March 2023 and in recent weeks, who have protested peacefully against the foreign agents law.

We must also make it clear that the reintroduced foreign agents law does not mirror any U.S. law and would be used to silence the civil society and media that play a significant role in advancing Georgia's democratic institutions. As you know, while free speech can be uncomfortable for any ruling party, the ability to disagree and express opinions publicly is what makes democracy stronger and more sustainable.

If this legislation is enacted, it could send a powerful message to the Georgian people that its government no longer reflects their wishes, is actively undermining its EU membership agenda, and refuses to uphold its constitution. As a result, this legislation would cast Georgia's strongest partners, the United States and European Union, as malign actors. Such a shift would require U.S. policy toward Georgia to change and reflect the new state of Georgia's politics.

As members of Congress who hold deep affection for the Georgian people and have championed strong bipartisan and bilateral ties with your country, we would be very disappointed if the Georgian Parliament passed the foreign agents law which would undermine Georgia's relationship with the United States. If this legislation is passed, we will be compelled to encourage a shift in U.S. policy toward Georgia which could include sanctions on those responsible for undermining Georgia's democratic development or inhibiting its Euro-Atlantic trajectory, reconsideration of direct U.S. financial assistance and the expansion of visa bans to the United States.

We will never abandon the aspirations of the Georgian people who have made their voices heard, loud and clear, in support of a democratic and European future. The relationship between the U.S. and Georgia is based on mutual interests and shared values. We all desire a strong relationship. The United States stands eager and ready to develop deeper ties that further support Georgia's economic development and Western integration, but this cannot continue until this legislation is withdrawn.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



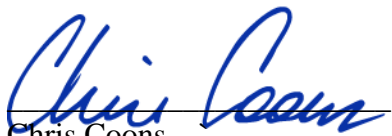
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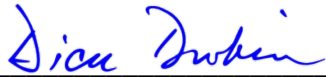
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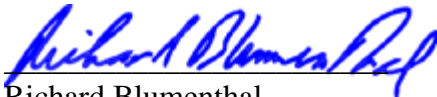
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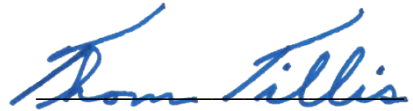
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