

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2020

President Donald Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue North West
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

As members of the U.S. House of Representatives representing the state of New York, we are deeply troubled to learn of a draft executive order titled “Making Federal Buildings Beautiful Again,” which would officially designate “classical” architecture as the preferred style for all federal courthouses, all federal public buildings in the Capital region, and all other federal public buildings whose cost exceeds \$50 million.¹

We unequivocally oppose this policy to promote one style of architecture for many federal buildings across the country. Restricting many federal buildings to one architectural style disregards the vast artistic diversity and creativity of the American people. The needs and specific characteristics of a community—including its history, regional preferences, topography, weather, and the style of surrounding buildings—may make another architectural style much more appropriate.

As you know, the American Institute of Architects (AIA)—a national association of architects and designers with nearly 10,000 members in the State of New York—recently wrote to you opposing the proposed executive order.² We share AIA’s concern that the order will establish an overly bureaucratic process that could eliminate alternate design options that reflect the preferences of local communities. We agree that our federal buildings should be designed with input of, by, and for the people that they directly serve, not political appointees.

We strongly support the mission of the General Services Administration’s Design Excellence Program, which encourages the propagation of different architectural styles with local design preferences and different regional cultural histories. The program also emphasizes the importance of sustainable design, energy efficiency, and the environmental impact of building materials. These are complex issues that often require diverse architectural solutions.

¹ Rogers, Katie, and Robin Pogrebin. “Draft Executive Order Would Give Trump a New Target: Modern Design.” The New York Times. The New York Times, February 5, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/05/arts/design/trump-modern-architecture.html>.

² “AIA Issues Letter to President Trump Opposing Proposed Executive Order.” The American Institute of Architects. Accessed February 19, 2020. https://www.aia.org/press-releases/6264391-aia-issues-letter-to-president-trump-oppos?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=daily.

This order also contradicts the federal government's own "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture," written in 1962 by the late New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. In this document, Senator Moynihan wrote, "The development of an official style must be avoided. Design must flow from the architectural profession to the government, and not vice versa."³ Straying from these long-standing principles with the top-down approach designated by this order will set a dangerous precedent for future Administrations.

Therefore, we believe you should reject this draft executive order and not pursue any policy change that would replace local input within the design process with a predetermined national mandate.

Sincerely,



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



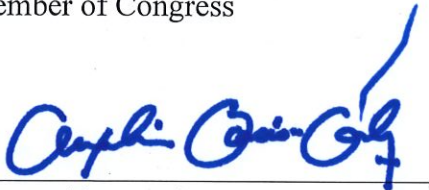
Max Rose
Member of Congress



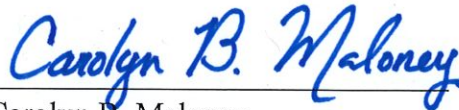
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

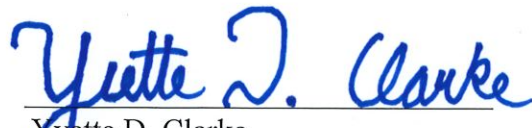


Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

³ "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture." GSA, August 13, 2017. <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/design-construction/design-excellence/design-excellence-program/guiding-principles-for-federal-architecture>.



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