

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 12, 2012

Acting Administrator Daniel M. Tangherlini
U.S. General Services Administration
GSA Office of the Administrator
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Acting Administrator Tangherlini:

We are writing to express our concern with the recently released LEED 2012 standards set forth by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and subsequent adoption of these standards by the General Services Administration (GSA). As a result of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, the GSA adopted the standards of USGBC's LEED program to meet our federal government's energy efficiency targets. We share GSA's support of increased building efficiency. However, we are concerned over changes that have been proposed in the LEED 2012 initiative, and the resulting potential for significant job losses and increased building costs at a time when our economy can least afford it.

The proposed LEED 2012 rating system is a significant departure from the previous version of the green building rating system, and could undermine the goal of improving energy efficiency by eliminating the use of dozens of approved materials and hundreds of proven products, all while driving up building costs to the taxpayer and threatening employment in our states. USGBC is planning to create two "Materials and Resources" (MR) credits under LEED 2012: one for "material ingredient reporting" and one for "avoidance of chemicals of concern." The credits would affect hundreds of substances – many of which are key to helping building products achieve the desired properties, including energy efficiency.

We have been supportive of GSA's goals, namely increasing energy efficiency and lowering operating costs over the life of a building. These efforts are admirable, and the LEED system may well contribute to increases in building efficiency. However, we are not convinced the proposed rating system is a positive step forward.

Ironically, these proposed credits could adversely impact the primary goals of the program by biasing the marketplace against products that play an essential role in helping us achieve the very energy efficiency intended. Moreover, USGBC has not conducted a preliminary analysis of whether alternative materials would be able to perform as well, providing no evidence that avoiding existing materials will result in improved energy efficiency, not to mention increased costs.

LEED 2012 not only threatens jobs, it will almost certainly cost taxpayers money. These proposed chemical restrictions could arbitrarily affect many energy-efficient construction products, such as insulation, roofing, wiring and energy efficient windows, putting a further strain on already tight federal budgets for building and infrastructure, energy costs, and economic development in the building sector that is struggling to rebound.

If USGBC does not reconsider its anti-chemical proposals in LEED 2012, we respectfully request that GSA stop using the LEED rating system, in favor of more performance based standards. As the largest federal government agency that has adopted LEED, GSA's adherence to LEED 2012 would amount to a federal endorsement of efficiency standards which preclude the use of some of the most effective techniques and materials. We understand GSA's interest in sustainability and energy efficiency throughout the federal building landscape. However, we believe that the Federal government should not base its choices on arbitrary restrictions that may not allow for the use of the most effective materials, especially when the rejection of these materials would mean the loss of jobs and economic growth at a time our country can least afford it.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We look forward to your response.

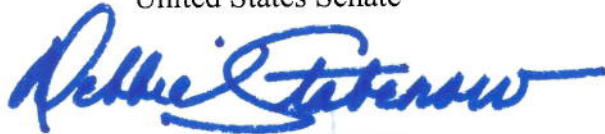
Sincerely,



Mary Landrieu
United States Senate



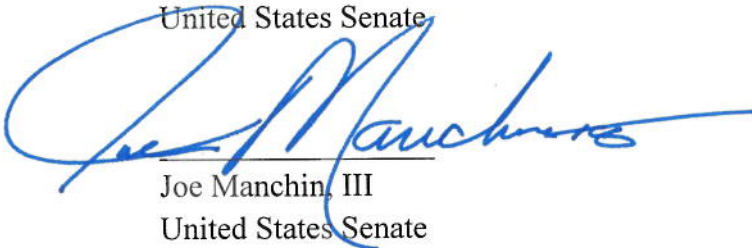
David Vitter
United States Senate



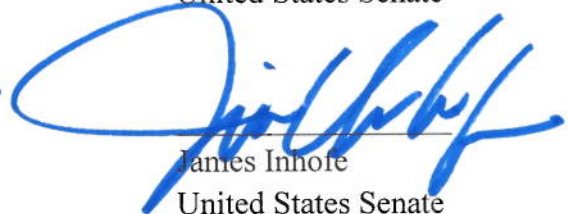
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate



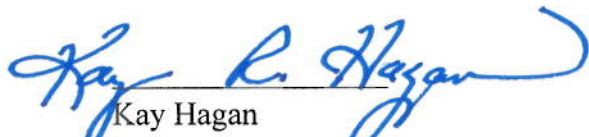
Ron Johnson
United States Senate

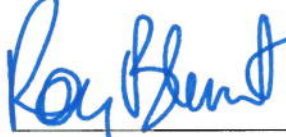


Joe Manchin, III
United States Senate

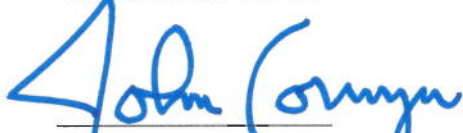


James Inhofe
United States Senate

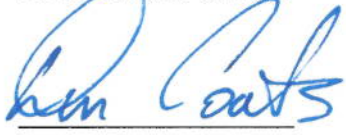

Kay Hagan
United States Senate


Roy Blunt
United States Senate

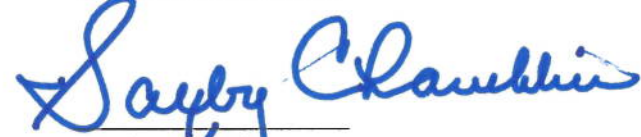

Pat Roberts
United States Senate


John Cornyn
United States Senate


Lindsey Graham
United States Senate


Daniel Coats
United States Senate


Mike Johanns
United States Senate


Saxby Chambliss
United States Senate


Johnny Isakson
United States Senate


Kay Bailey Hutchison
United States Senate


Bob Corker
United States Senate


Lamar Alexander
United States Senate