

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 9, 2021

Her Excellency Elżbieta Witek
Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland
Chancellery of the Sejm
ul. Wiejska 4/6/8
00-902 Warsaw

Dear Your Excellency,

The alliance between the United States and the Republic of Poland is based on shared interests and democratic values. Our countries have shared warm bilateral relations ever since freedom was restored in Poland in 1989 after decades of tyrannical oppression.

We are writing to you in this spirit of friendship to express our serious concern about legislation that was initially adopted by the Sejm on June 24 and then slightly amended by the Senate on July 23. The legislation at issue seeks to amend Articles 156 and 158 of the Administrative Procedure Code, which previously enabled a limited number of claimants to recover or receive just compensation for property that was wrongfully confiscated by successfully challenging unlawful communist-era administrative decisions. If these amendments are enacted into law, new claims challenging illegal communist-era administrative decisions would be barred, denying claimants a pathway to obtain a small measure of justice for property wrongfully confiscated during the Holocaust and Communist occupied periods. It is especially disconcerting that the proposed legislation is retroactive in nature and would completely foreclose the possibility for Jewish and non-Jewish rightful property owners to recover their property – many of whom have had cases pending for years– further harming Polish Holocaust victims and survivors who have already suffered so much.

Property restitution and justice for Holocaust victims and survivors is a broadly supported priority for the United States government. We were gratified that Poland joined with 46 other countries in 2009 to endorse the Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets, committing to rectify the wrongful seizure of property during the Holocaust and its aftermath.

Since then, in the context of strengthening the bilateral relationship between our countries, Congress has repeatedly urged Poland to address this issue fairly and comprehensively. Yet, 12 years later, Poland remains the only country in the European Union that has not passed comprehensive private property restitution legislation. Both the status quo and the pending new law run counter to prior commitments that Poland took upon itself by endorsing the Terezin Declaration.

Prior to the Second World War, Poland was home to Europe's largest Jewish community – a community that was decimated during the Holocaust. Property restitution for Holocaust survivors is about more than just money – it is an issue of morality, closure, acknowledgment of a horrific loss, and connection to a family and life that was brutally taken from them.

Holocaust survivors, and other rightful owners, who fled Poland to escape Antisemitism or Communist rule have waited decades for justice resulting from the confiscation or nationalization of their property during the Holocaust or by the Communist government.

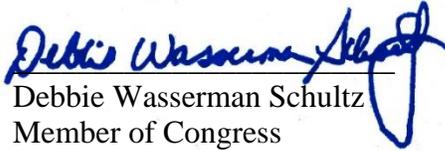
New, insurmountable legal conditions should not be imposed in 2021 that make it virtually impossible to recover their property or receive just compensation.

We appeal to you in the spirit of our longstanding mutual respect to ensure that laws in Poland are consistent with the standards set forth by the Terezin Declaration, which both Poland and the United States endorsed in 2009. We therefore implore you to act boldly to use every tool available to you to stop the advancement of the proposed legislation.

Sincerely,



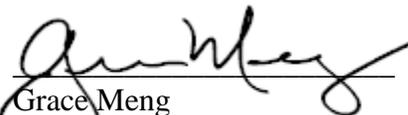
Steny H. Hoyer
Majority Leader



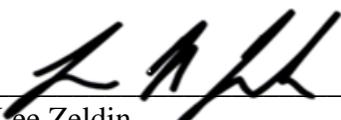
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress