I am contacting you as my member of Congress to urge your support for a Foreign Service early retirement option, especially as reductions in force (RIF) take place across our foreign affairs agencies.

Right now, there is no early retirement authority for the Foreign Service. With RIF notices provided to members of the Foreign Service at State and USAID, timely congressional authorization of an early retirement option is essential to give those facing involuntary retirement a compassionate transition out of the Foreign Service.

In the event of a RIF, Foreign Service members in grades FS-01 and above qualify for an immediate lifetime annuity and a continuation of their Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) insurance coverage. However, FS-02s and below receive only severance pay, unless they meet the age and service requirements for a voluntary annuity (most commonly, at age 50 with 20 years of service).

Without a Foreign Service early retirement authority in place, those just shy of being eligible for a voluntary annuity would lose their health benefits and would only be able to receive a deferred annuity.

I hope you will work with your colleagues to authorize a Foreign Service early retirement option as soon as possible.