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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
27TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

PLEASE RESPOND TO:  
2206 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0927  
 (202) 225-3931  
FAX: (202) 225-5620  
<http://www.house.gov/ros-lehtinen>

DISTRICT OFFICE:  
4960 SW 72 AVENUE  
SUITE 208  
MIAMI, FL 33155  
(305) 668-2285  
FAX: (305) 668-5970

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Dear Lauren:

Thank you for writing to me regarding South Florida's coral reefs. I am delighted that you are taking an interest in our environment. We need more bright young people like yourself to become engaged on this and other important issues impacting our community.

As you know, one of the most recognizable charms of our community is the miles of beautiful Atlantic coastline. What many do not realize, however, is that just off our coast lies the third largest barrier reef in the world. Unfortunately, since 1980, scientists have witnessed a decline in coral on the Florida reef tract by 80% or more. Our coral reefs are an important economic engine in our region and generate billions of dollars in additional revenue each year through fishing, diving, snorkeling, and tourism. Coral reefs not only provide economic benefits for our community - healthy coral growth will also allow our reefs to keep pace with rising sea levels to limit the potentially devastating impacts of storm surge on our vulnerable coasts.

As a Member of Congress from South Florida, it is my duty to help protect and restore our coral reefs and the environmental and economic benefits they produce for current and future generations to enjoy. I am proud to have introduced H.R. 5771, the Conserving Our Reefs And Livelihoods (CORAL) Act, in Congress to chart a course to tackle the serious issues impacting the health and sustainability of our coral reefs. The CORAL Act acknowledges that the environmental and economic benefits of coral reefs are intertwined and provides incentives for increased research into the causes of reef decline, while giving state and local governments and their nonprofit partners the tools needed to effectively conserve and restore healthy reefs.

Once again, thank you for writing to me about coral reef decline in South Florida. I encourage you to continue pursuing your interest in our coastal environment, and I hope to hear from you again soon on this and other issues.

Sincerely,

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress

IRL: tcj