



The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Thune, and Minority Leader Schumer,

As members and partners of the Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance, a network of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist organizations working in solidarity with the world's most vulnerable people, we write to you to express our grave concerns over the sudden order to stop lifesaving foreign assistance work around the globe and the dismantling of USAID. Despite waivers to this blanket freeze being issued, they have been ineffectual in restarting even "life-saving" activities, in part due to all payments being stopped. We ask you to act urgently to work with your colleagues in Congress and with the Administration to unfreeze and restart funding and work on U.S. foreign assistance programs.

We recognize that all new administrations have the right to review ongoing programs against their policy goals and that such reviews are a standard part of any transition. However, ceasing almost all life-saving humanitarian, peacebuilding, health, and poverty-focused development assistance during such a review is unconscionable and menacing, and inflicts harm on innocent people. Such actions are not in keeping with our nation's core values and the will of the American people.

Members of Congress have always shared that moral compass. This includes Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who as a senator [spoke](#) strongly in support of U.S. foreign assistance, "Faced with historic deficits and a dangerous national debt, there has been increasing talk of reducing our foreign aid budget. But we need to remember that these international coalitions that we have the opportunity to lead are not just military ones, they can also be humanitarian ones. [...] We need to continue this kind of foreign aid investment, but not just in PEPFAR, but in malaria control, vaccine programs and agriculture initiatives so that we can make similar strides in preventing hunger and establishing a healthier global community."

Congress' investment in U.S. foreign assistance has been clear and committed. Our multi-faith community is also committed— committed to the moral obligation to provide food, water, medicine, emergency nutrition and so much more to those affected by poverty, conflict and marginalization around the world, especially children.

We know the American public understands the importance of this work, too. Privately generated resources fuel faith-based organizations' work around the world to assist the most vulnerable. But to be very clear, we cannot do this work alone. We cannot match the scope and scale of U.S. government funding, material support, and influence. For decades, faith-based organizations have worked side-by-side with implementers of U.S. government-funded programs, exemplifying public-private cooperation at its best, with genuinely lifesaving results.



Today more newborns survive to take their first steps. More children survive beyond their critical fifth birthday than ever before. Life expectancy for people living with HIV is much longer and more productive. More people have safe water. More countries are coming out of poverty and becoming U.S. trading partners. The list of successes goes on and on. These partnerships between faith-based organizations and the U.S. government are crucial. But now—right now—we are fielding desperate requests from our local, on-the-ground operations.

For example, despite [claims otherwise](#), PEPFAR-funded organizations have not received self-executing waivers, which means each implementer needs to hear from grant or contract officers at USAID before resuming any activities and are locked out of the payment management system (PMS) for accessing PEPFAR funds. A major health program in Kenya, serving 28,612 HIV/AIDS and TB patients, 67% women, including 621 children ages 0 -14 yrs and 1,700 adolescents and young adults ages 15-24 yrs, has lost access to critical PEPFAR funding. The set of 14 clinics, founded by Christian faith-based organizations, use PEPFAR funds to provide free care to impoverished people and tests 2,500 clients monthly. They cannot pay staff going forward and they will run out of medication within days. They will begin turning patients away within two weeks, by mid-February. According to the program's director, "Once we start turning patients away, desperation will set in, patients will lose hope, their health will quickly deteriorate, and there will be a massive number of deaths. The majority of patients will lose confidence in our services, and it will be very difficult to get them to return for treatment even after resumption of funding." Without daily medication and testing, HIV/AIDS-related deaths and new infections will rise, reversing progress made in epidemic control, educational engagement (i.e., kids going to school), employment rates, and economic stability that has been seen across PEPFAR countries. As for TB, without consistent treatment, people will die and the global threat of antibiotic resistant TB will increase.

Additionally, it is worth remembering that every modern day president has spoken in favor of America's commitment to the least of these through U.S. foreign assistance. Every Democrat, every Republican, [including President Trump](#), who said during his last term, "the United States continues to lead the world in humanitarian assistance, including famine prevention and relief, in South Sudan, Somalia, and northern Nigeria and Yemen. We have invested in better health and opportunity all over the world through programs like PEPFAR, which funds AIDS relief, the President's Malaria Initiative, the Global Health Security Agenda, the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, and the Women Entrepreneurs' Finance Initiative, part of our commitment to empowering women all across the globe."

Congress' on-going commitment to its power of the purse is vital to this work and to this democracy. We ask that you do not stand by as America's generosity is vilified. We thank every member of Congress for standing steadfast as together we navigate the challenging days ahead. But no day is more challenging than the one in which a mother must choose which child is fed that day and which will go hungry.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists
American Baptist Home Mission Societies
American Friends Service Committee
American Hindu World Service (AHWS)
Bread for the World
Bureau des Formations Médicales Agréées du Rwanda, BUFMAR



Christian Connections for International Health
Christian Health Association of Liberia
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
Church World Service
Clinica Amistad
Compassionate Co., LLC
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Disabled Children's Fund
The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faiths for Safe Water
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Helping Hand for Relief & Development
Hindus for Human Rights
International Christian Medical and Dental Association
Isaiah 58 Care Foundation
Kupenda for the Children
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
National Council of Churches
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
Pax Christi USA
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Office of Public Witness
Rapha Medical Clinic
Reproductive Health Consulting
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sojourners
The Tikvah Centre
Unemployed and Vulnerable Foundation Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ
World Renew
Zimbabwe YMCA

CC: All members of the United States House of Representatives and United States Senate