August 30, 2017

Dear Senator xxxx:

Thank you for your leadership in support of maternal and child health programs serving the most vulnerable. As faith-based organizations and individuals who view these programs as a moral responsibility of the United States, we are grateful for your commitment to saving the lives of women and children around the world. As the Senate Appropriations Committee debates the FY 2018 State and Foreign Operations Appropriation Act, we write to express our support for fully funding international family planning at the FY 2017 enacted level of $575M.

As members of the Faith-Based Coalition for Healthy Mothers and Children Worldwide, a network of advocates speaking out about the struggles that mothers and children in developing nations face daily, we know that an investment in family planning is an investment that saves lives, particularly in areas of conflict and instability.

Earlier this year, we wrote the Chairman and Ranking Members of both Appropriations Committees to express our support for maintaining a strong International Affairs budget in the face of severe cuts proposed by President Trump’s Administration. We understand the current constraints on the budget and are very grateful for the support you and your committee provided to protect this critical funding.

Now, as the FY 2018 State and Foreign Operations Act nears consideration, we are hopeful that Senate support for international family planning will remain as strong as it has been in recent years and respectfully ask that you provide your support for funding this critical account at enacted FY17 levels, including through a potential bilateral funding amendment, if necessary.

When women and girls lack access to the education and resources they need to create a healthy plan for becoming mothers, the result is tragic—303,000 women in developing nations die from preventable complications during childbirth, and 5.9 million children die before their fifth birthday each year. In many cases these mothers and children are without a home or the resources needed for basic care due to conflict, as women and girls make up 80 percent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees globally.

We recognize the difficult decisions you face in a constrained budget environment, but we know the truly life-saving impact of U.S. investments in women and children. As people of faith we believe that we all have a duty to do what is within our power to help uplift these women and their families to flourish through improved health. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Senator William H. Frist, MD

Founder and Chair, Hope Through Healing Hands

Jeff Ables  
Lead Pastor, Crossroads Church  
Lafayette, LA

Sue Allen  
Coordinator, Social Justice Ministry  
Starkville, MS

Kenny & Christiev Alphin  
Artist (Big & Rich)  
Nashville, TN
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<td>Interim Executive Director, Christian Connections for International Health</td>
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<td>Clinical and Outreach Director, Hope Clinic for Women</td>
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<td>President and Professor of Theology, Christian Theological Seminary</td>
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<td>Sr. VP &amp; Group Publisher, Zondervan</td>
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<td>International Missions Team, Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church</td>
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<td>CEO, World Relief</td>
<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
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<td>Director(s) of Family Health, Christian Flights International</td>
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<td>Author &amp; Episcopal Priest</td>
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<td>Author, Professor of Religious Studies, Belmont University</td>
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<td>Teaching Pastor and Director of Missions, Frazer United Methodist Church</td>
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<td>CEO, Bridge2Rwanda</td>
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<td>Executive Director, Children’s Nutrition Program in Haiti</td>
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<td>Global Poverty Alleviation Catalyst, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.</td>
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<td>Westminster Presbyterian Church</td>
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<td>President, Partnership for Faith and Development</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
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<td>Executive Director, Hope Through Healing Hands</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
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<td>Author &amp; Speaker</td>
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<td>Author &amp; Religion Columnist</td>
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<td>Executive Director, SIL LEAD, Inc.</td>
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<td>Executive Director, Hearts with Haiti</td>
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<td>Pastor, Vestavia Hills Baptist Church</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL</td>
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Mike Geary  
CEO, Lexington Leadership Foundation  
Lexington, KY

Mike Glenn  
Sr. Pastor, Brentwood Baptist Church  
Brentwood, TN

Amy Grant  
Artist  
Nashville, TN

Natalie Grant  
Artist  
Brentwood, TN

Jennifer Grant  
Author & Speaker  
Wheaton, IL

Andrew Greer  
Artist, Songwriters, & Author  
Franklin, TN

Tracie Hamilton  
Philanthropist & Mother  
Franklin, TN

Scott Hamilton  
Olympic Gold Medalist & Philanthropist  
Franklin, TN

Michael Hart  
Associate Pastor, University Presbyterian Church  
Orlando, FL

Dan Haseltine  
Artist, Jars of Clay  
Franklin, TN

Rev. Joshua McCrory Hatcher  
Senior Pastor, Historic Trinity Lutheran Church  
St. Louis, MO

Esther Havens  
Humanitarian Photographer  
Dallas, TX

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe  
General Secretary, General Board of Church & Society, The United Methodist Church  
Washington, DC

Dr. William “Hess” Hester  
Senior Pastor, Southern Hills Baptist Church  
Tulsa, OK

Marcus D. Holman  
Missions Pastor & President of Bethel’s Family Church Global Reach  
Houston, TX

Lynne Hybels  
Advocate for Global Engagement, Willow Creek Community Church  
South Barrington, IL

Christopher Ingram  
Senior Pastor, Yates Baptist Church  
Durham, NC

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Missions Pastor, First Assembly North Little Rock  
Little Rock, AR

Velvet Kelm  
President, The [M]edia Collective  
Franklin, TN

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President, Church Women United State of Ohio and Church United of Greater Cincinnati Inc.  
Cincinnati, OH

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Rector, St. Martin’s Episcopal Church  
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Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Midwifery & Women’s Health  
Nashville, TN

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Lead Pastor, Beechland Baptist Church  
Louisville, KY

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Artist, Jars of Clay  
Franklin, TN

Anne Lucas  
Director, e3 Mission, Mobilization, & Medical  
Birmingham, AL

Rev. Damon Lynch, Jr. & Barbara Lynch  
Pastor and First Lady, New Jerusalem Baptist Church  
Cincinnati, OH

Heloise Maconochie, PhD  
Visiting Scholar, Early Childhood Education and Care, Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne  
Fort Wayne, IN

Rob Marshall  
President/CEO, Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries  
Birmingham, AL

Ray Martin  
Emeritus Executive Director, Christian Connections for International Health  
McLean, VA

Sarah Masen  
Artist  
Nashville, TN

John Mays  
Sr. VP-A&R, Centricity Music  
Franklin, TN

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Minister, Vestavia Hills Baptist Church  
Birmingham, AL

Tom McClosey  
Senior Pastor, First United Methodist Church  
Orlando, FL

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Founder and Chair, The Medical Institute for Sexual Health  
Plano, TX

Brian McLaren  
Author, Speaker, & Activist – Convergence.us.org  
Marco Island, FL

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International Pastor, Mosaic Church  
Los Angeles, CA

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Board member, Christian Flights International  
Perryville, KY

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President, Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO)  
McLean, VA

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President, Compassion International  
Colorado Springs, CO

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Sr. Pastor, Church on the Drive  
Orlando, FL

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SVP & Group Publisher, HarperCollins Christian Publishing  
Nashville, TN

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Nathan Nockels  Music Producer  Franklin, TN
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Charlie Peacock  Music Producer & Artist-in-Residence, Lipscomb University  Nashville, TN
Anna Phillips  Development Director, Bridge2Rwanda  Nashville, TN
Robin Price  Outreach Director, Crossroads Church  Lafayette, LA
Richard Ramsey  Outreach Pastor, North Metro Church  Marietta, GA
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Dr. Gus Reyes  Director, Christian Life Commission, Texas Baptists  Austin, TX
Emily Chapman Richards  Vice-President/Assistant Executive Director, Show Hope  Franklin, TN
Marlene Rickert, FNP-BC  Medical Director, Hope for Haiti Foundation  Raleigh, NC
Dr. Samuel Rodriguez  President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference  Sacramento, CA
Ash Rogers  Executive Director, Lwala Community Alliance  Nashville, TN
John Rogers  Associate Pastor for Campus Ministry, University Presbyterian Church  Chapel Hill, NC
Josh Rouse  Global Outreach Pastor, Northeast Christian Church  Louisville, KY
Rev. Gabriel Salguero  President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition  Orlando, FL
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Rev. Sarah Shelton  Sr. Pastor, Baptist Church of the Covenant  Birmingham, AL
Lott Shudde  Manager, Third Day  Brentwood, TN
Angie Smith  Author & Speaker  Franklin, TN
Anita Smith  President, Children’s AIDS Fund International  Washington, DC
Michael W. Smith  Singer/Songwriter  Franklin, TN
Shepherd Smith  President, Institute for Youth Development  Washington, DC
Durwood Sneed  GlobalX: Director, North Point Community Church  Atlanta, GA
Jeff Spry  Executive Director, City Connections, Inc.  Little Rock, AR
Anne Stafford, MD  Pediatrician, University of Alabama-Birmingham  Birmingham, AL
Rev. Becca Stevens  St. Augustine’s Chapel; Founder, Magdalene/Thistle Farms  Nashville, TN
David Stevens, MD, MA  CEO, Christian Medical and Dental Associations  Bristol, TN
Andrea Summer, MD  Co-Director, International Adoption Clinic, Medical University of South Carolina  Charleston, SC
Jason Suratt  Pastor of Stewardship and Global Missions, Seacoast Church  Charleston, SC
Cathy Taylor, DrPH, MSN, RN  Dean & Professor, Belmont University  Nashville, TN
Debbie Taylor  Artist & Mother  Nashville, TN
Steve Taylor  Recording Artist & Filmmaker  Nashville, TN
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<td>Author &amp; Co-Founder, Grace for Moms</td>
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