

May 12, 2017

The Vice President
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President,

As the Trump administration works to reform the operations of the Federal government to more surely serve all communities with excellence, we strongly recommend as an essential means the revitalization of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and its counterpart Centers in major Federal agencies, from HHS and HUD to Justice, Labor, and USAID. We are glad to note the appointment recently of several people to the Centers, and encourage the naming of leaders to the other Centers and to the White House Office.

Greater effectiveness of Federal investments in communities requires a change from simply providing services and goods to catalyzing the uplift of communities and the transformation of lives. For this, there needs to be great innovation in Federal programs, greater competitiveness for Federal funding, and a robust engagement with local and faith-based organizations that have shown their effectiveness.

This is the vision and the method of the faith-based initiative:

- removing barriers that exclude from federal support effective local groups simply because of their religion or their small size;
- redesigning federal services to support, not replace, bottom-up solutions;
- putting the focus on local solutions that work and helping them become sustainable and more effective.

The faith-based initiative developed innovative equal treatment rules that now have a two-decade history and have won broad backing. These federal regulations enable faith-based organizations to participate in federally funded programs of service (emergency shelter, substance abuse treatment, prisoner re-entry, low-income housing, international relief and development, etc.) while maintaining their religious identity and holistic way of serving. Correspondingly, the rules ensure that federally funded programs are able to utilize the most effective providers, whether religious or secular.

Yet, because government bureaucracy defaults to a preference for large, secular, providers with the best connections and grant writers, the White House faith-based office and the agency faith-based Centers are crucial for ensuring that these rules are followed by federal, state, and local officials who administer federal funding.

The Office and Centers also play a vital role by assisting smaller organizations and those new to government partnerships to understand the rules and processes of federal grant making and contracting, and to improve their operations, accountability, and outcomes. Such changes

expand the pool of potential government partners that know best how to serve the particular needs and interests of their local communities.

And, by putting Federal agencies and program officials into close contact with small and faith-based programs with their unique connections to local needs, the faith-based initiative enables the creation of innovative new approaches to community, family, and individual needs, getting the government out of the rut of simply funding more of the same.

We commend to you and the administration the record and the promise of the Federal faith-based initiative as key to improving the effectiveness of Federal social expenditures. And we commend the initiative—because it reaches into America’s diverse religious, racial and ethnic communities and localities—as a prime way to embody and showcase the administration’s commitment to renewing America’s potential for all of its citizens, neighborhoods, rural areas, and cities.

Most respectfully,

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Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

Bishop Juan Carlos Mendez, Churches in Action

Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals

The Rev Luis Cortés, Jr., President, Esperanza

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Apostle Angeloyd Fenrick, Higher Ground Prayer Ministries

Pastor Gary Hill, Exodus Deliverance Ministries, Washington, DC

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