

July 22, 2024

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Coons and Ranking Member Graham,

We, the 64 undersigned organizations, urge you to safeguard and invest in critical funding for peacebuilding, human rights, humanitarian aid, migration, international climate finance, poverty-focused development assistance and related accounts in the Fiscal Year 2025 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPs) appropriations bill.

As organizations committed to promoting peace, advancing human rights, and supporting human dignity, we are gravely concerned by cuts included in the House-passed SFOPs appropriations bill (H.R. 8771). We know that thoughtful spending prioritizes programs that prevent and ameliorate international crises and protect life. The House has taken the opposite approach, undermining the United States' legacy of compassionate aid and international leadership.

As the climate crisis continues to drive poverty, violent conflict, and forced migration, the House bill zeroes out USAID's Environment Programs in section 7061. As one of the leading historical emitters of greenhouse gases, the United States has a moral responsibility to act to address the global climate crisis. In addition, it is clearly in our national security interests to continue to lead in clean energy partnerships around the world. We urge the Senate to follow a different course from the House and support strong investments in climate adaptation and mitigation for the developing economies, which bear the worst impacts of increasing storms, floods, and drought with fewer resources to respond.

Further, the House bill features unsustainable cuts to consequential peacebuilding programs, such as the Complex Crises Fund, at a time when the world is facing some of its highest levels of violence and conflict since the end of World War II.ⁱ Rather than abandon U.S. investments in critical peacebuilding and conflict prevention work, we urge you to invest fully in these accounts. As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres succinctly stated, "Instead of responding to crises, we need to invest far more in prevention. Prevention works saves lives and is cost-effective."ⁱⁱ The United States must equally support non-violent measures that are critical to responding to violence and instability.

The United States' long-held values have proven that investments in life-sustaining humanitarian aid are critical for responding to violent conflict, forced displacement, climate shocks, and grave atrocities. When the world fails to prevent such crises, accounts such as Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) and Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) enable the United States to aid families seeking refuge from life-threatening situations and respond to sudden humanitarian needs. Irresponsibly, the House bill excludes ERMA and cuts MRA funding by nearly \$1.5 billion. Similarly, a more than \$1 billion cut to International Disaster Assistance threatens support for some of the world's most vulnerable people in times of extreme fear, suffering, and displacement. Since its foundation, the United States has

seen itself as a haven for those fleeing persecution and seeking a better life. We urge you to embrace this value and fully fund these vital accounts.

The House bill also eliminates full funding for the United Nations' (U.N.) regular budget and several U.N. bodies, including the U.N. Development Programme, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). These cuts would dramatically diminish the United States' standing and diplomatic influence globally. Now is a time when collective action is critical to addressing global challenges. We urge Congress to fully fund U.S. commitments to the U.N. to enable the United States to strengthen its credibility and goodwill at the U.N. by uplifting its diplomatic goals—rather than relying on threats and coercion. In particular, Congress should sustain UNRWA's vital work as a lifeline to Palestinians by increasing, rather than prohibiting support for its work in the FY25 budget and beyond.

We urge you to invest in peacebuilding, human rights, humanitarian aid, international climate finance, poverty-focused development assistance, and related accounts. Collectively, these accounts bolster our nation's values, global leadership, and security. Thank you for your efforts to support the vital work of the State Department and USAID to aid the most vulnerable among us.

Sincerely,

Afghans for a Better Tomorrow
Alliance of Baptists
American Friends Service Committee
American Hindu World Service (AHWS)
Better World Campaign
Bridge Alliance Education Fund
Bridges Faith Initiative
Charity & Security Network
Children's AIDS Fund International
Christian Connections for International Health
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
Church World Service
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Disabled Children's Fund
Estrella del Paso (Formerly Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc)
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faiths for Safe Water
Food Justice DMV
Foreign Policy for America
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Human Rights First
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Interfaith Power & Light
Interfaith Welcome Coalition of San Antonio TX
International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
Invisible Children

JAMAAT (Jews and Muslims and Allies Acting Together)
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Kino Border Initiative
Latin America Working Group
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Never Again Coalition
Nonviolent Peaceforce
Oxfam America
Passionist Solidarity Network
Pax Christi USA
Peace Catalyst International
Peace Direct
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Refugees International
Saferworld
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
Search for Common Ground
Sin Fronteras Nuevo Mexico
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sojourners
The Episcopal Church
The United Church of Christ
The United Methodist Church — General Board of Church and Society
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
UNRWA USA National Committee
Washington Office of Public Witness
Win Without War
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Witness at the Border

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair of Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair of Senate Appropriations Committee

ⁱ *Number of state-based conflicts.* (n.d.). Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/the-number-of-active-state-based-conflicts>

ⁱⁱ UN News. (2018, March 5). *'Instead of responding to crises, we need to invest far more in prevention,' says UN chief.* <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/03/1004162>