

August 20, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy,
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

As members of the Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance, a network of over 50 Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and multi-faith organizations, we are committed to saving lives and advancing the dignity of vulnerable and marginalized persons and communities across the world. We support robust U.S. investment in international humanitarian and poverty-focused development assistance and peacebuilding programs that bolster human rights and alleviate suffering from hunger and thirst, extreme poverty, forced displacement, debilitating illness, natural disasters and violent conflict.

We were grateful for the bipartisan and bicameral letter written by Leadership of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that strongly urged “the Administration not to submit a new rescission package...that would cancel over \$4 billion in funding vital for American foreign policy.” We remain concerned that the White House has unilaterally seized funds properly appropriated by Congress and signed into law by the President, in violation of the balance of powers afforded under the Constitution. By refusing to make all appropriated funds available for the time allowed by statute, the President is eroding Congress’s power of the purse.

We urge you and your colleagues to take immediate and decisive action and reject the recent rescissions to the international affairs budget proposed by the White House.

As organizations operating around the globe, we have seen first-hand the critical value of U.S. foreign assistance funding, influence and leadership. We know these funds are essential for improving humanitarian, development, and health outcomes in the world’s most marginalized and vulnerable communities. We know how these funds save lives, help stabilize regions, and create economic opportunity. This life-affirming investment benefits the United States as well.

U.S. leadership and investment have had historic impact around the globe over the last 30 years, contributing to halving the number of preventable under-five child deaths, halving the number of people living in poverty and halving the number of children and adolescents out of school. Results like these and much more show that

U.S. government engagement matters, and it is consistent with the values of our faith traditions and the American people.

U.S. government programs and partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) are ongoing with multi-year commitments that span all sectors, including food security, education, economic stability, credible democratic processes, violence prevention, global health, and labor and trade. These partnerships are crucial. Though FBOs collectively receive more than 80 percent of their funding from non-governmental sources, if the U.S. government fails to fund poverty-focused development assistance commitments, faith-based implementers cannot rely on private donations to fill gaps. Abrupt rescissions can be doubly damaging to local groups with whom we partner to reduce poverty and violence as they make numerous long-term decisions, such as hiring, based on the understanding that this funding will continue according to the agreements the Administration has made, and the parameters set by Congress.

U.S. government engagement is critical to success. It encourages many other stakeholders and investors, and contributes to the ultimate goal: long-term sustainability and human security in a more flourishing world.

We urge Congress to reject any proposed rescission of U.S. foreign assistance funds obligated by Congress under its independent authority, and act to require the Administration to distribute all funds as originally intended.

Sincerely,

1. Adventist Development and Relief Agency
2. American Jewish World Service
3. Bread for the World
4. Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
5. Catholic Medical Mission Board
6. Christian Connections for International Health
7. Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
8. Church World Service
9. Disabled Children's Fund
10. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
11. Faiths for Safe Water
12. Food for the Hungry
13. IMA World Health
14. Islamic Relief USA
15. Lutheran World Relief
16. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
17. Mennonite Central Committee, US Washington Office
18. Presbyterian Church (USA)
19. Tearfund USA
20. The Union for Reform Judaism
21. The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
22. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

- 23. World Relief
- 24. World Renew

- 25. World Vision
- 26. Zakat Foundation of America