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Director Young:

As President Biden made clear in his Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World (“Memorandum”), it is the policy of the United States “to pursue an end to violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, or sex characteristics, and to lead by the power of our example in the cause of advancing the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons around the world.” We welcomed this strong statement of policy, alongside those on sexual and reproductive health and rights, as a call to action to bring the U.S. back into a position of leadership on global LGBTQI+ rights. However, this commitment will not be fully effective unless the U.S. aligns its political and financial commitments at this unique moment in history for the LGBTQI+ rights movement. We, the undersigned 110 organizations, respectfully urge you to support increased funding for global LGBTQI+ rights programs at the State Department’s Global Equality Fund to \$40 million and USAID’s Inclusive Development Hub’s Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons to \$30 million in the President’s Budget Request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024.

Though several countries have made great strides in promoting LGBTQI+ rights – including the decriminalization of same-sex relationships in Botswana in 2019, Costa Rica’s legalization of same-sex marriage in 2020, and Argentina’s issuance of non-binary identification cards and passports in 2021 – sixty-eight countries continue to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts. In nine of these countries, same-sex relations are punishable by death.¹ Moreover, many more countries continue to be dangerous, and even deadly, for LGBTQI+ people even after the implementation of protective laws. Over the last year, opponents of LGBTQI+ rights have introduced harmful anti-LGBTQI+ legislation in a myriad of countries, such as Ghana’s draconian legislation that would increase penal sentences for LGBTQI+ individuals and Hungary’s campaign to remove the topics of sexual orientation and gender identity from schools and other public spaces. These attacks have forced LGBTQI+ rights advocates to conduct emergency response campaigns while navigating everyday barriers - exacerbated by criminalization, stigma, and discrimination - to basic services, including formal employment, health care, housing, and education.

The COVID-19 pandemic only amplified vulnerabilities and inequalities for the global LGBTQI+ community.² Rates of unemployment, gender-based violence, and homelessness increased and LGBTQI+ people lost already precarious access to services, including legal protections and sexual and reproductive health care. LGBTQI+ human rights defenders suffered from increased threats of arrest, physical attacks,

¹ Ramón Mendos, Lucas, et al. “State-Sponsored Homophobia Report.” ILGA, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, 15 Dec. 2020, <https://ilga.org/state-sponsored-homophobia-report>.

² Bishop, Amie. “Vulnerability Amplified: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBTIQ People.” OutRight Action International, OutRight Action International, 17 June 2020, <https://outrightinternational.org/content/vulnerability-amplified-impact-covid-19-pandemic-lgbtqi-people>.

or psychological trauma, including raids on homes or homeless shelters, the closure of medical clinics serving the community, and sexual harassment of transgender individuals at check points.³ Many COVID-19 relief efforts have missed LGBTQI+ communities due to binary gendered approaches to distribution, a reliance on unsafe spaces for LGBTQI+ people, non-inclusive definitions of “family,” and discrimination by relief workers.⁴ As a result, LGBTQI+ groups have been forced to take on roles as humanitarian aid organizations, in addition to carrying forward already existing workstreams in their communities.

Yet, COVID-19 only exacerbated the already limited landscape for LGBTQI+ funding. Between 2017 to 2018, global LGBTQI+ funding from donor governments made up less than 4 cents out of every \$100 of international development efforts and assistance, and for many LGBTQI+ organizations, no funding was available within their own country, including many countries where same-sex relations remain illegal. According to the F&M Global Barometers on Gay and Trans Rights, LGBTQI+ organizations in only 124 of the 166 countries in which LGBTQI+ organizations are registered received external support.

For LBQ, trans, and intersex organizations, the funding landscape is even more challenging. Roughly 47% of all LBQ-led organizations operate on less than \$10,000 per year. This number jumps to 56% for trans groups and an astonishing rate of 81% for intersex organizations.⁵ LBQ, trans, and intersex organizations receive only a small percentage of the total funding focused on their populations, or 35%, 41%, and 40% respectively. As a result, LBQ, trans, and intersex organizations often work in survival mode and are unable to implement their full strategies to address harmful gender norms, legal barriers, and other community-led responses to violence, stigma, and discrimination.

Given the funding landscape, programs that have traditionally supported LGBTQI+ organizations have had to change their structure in order to reasonably balance the requests they receive. The National Democratic Institute’s (NDI) Equal Rights in Action (ERA) Fund is a small grants program providing funding of up to \$25,000 to smaller organizations upon referral from embassies. Launched in 2018, the program has been able to grant over \$1.6 million to local LGBTQI+ organizations. Though a highly successful program, NDI has significantly scaled back the number of countries in which it provides small grants due to the number of applications they processed and the amount of funding available to distribute. For example, from 2020-2021, the ERA Fund received nominations from both U.S. and GEF partner embassies of 144 LGBTQI+ organizations in 35 countries. This stands in stark contrast to the funding available the previous cycle, in which 100 countries participated and 278 LGBTQI+ organizations were nominated.

Even with the changes in geographic reach, the ERA Fund continues to face significant shortfalls. This year’s cycle included the nominations of 144 groups for approximately \$3.6 million in funding - despite the ERA Fund having a budget of only \$600,000. NDI was able to fund only 26 of the 74 completed

³ Kilbride, Erin. “LGBTIQ+ And Sex Workers Rights: Defenders At Risk During Covid-19.” Frontline Defenders, Frontline Defenders, Dec. 2020, https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/front_line_defenders_covid-19.pdf.

⁴ “Responding to a Crisis: Meet the Grantees of OutRight’s COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund.” OutRight Action International, OutRight Action International, 22 Dec. 2020, https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/7x9.75_BriefingPaperNov2020WDonors.pdf.

⁵ “Diving Deeper Series: Under the Surface of LGBTI Funding Data.” Global Philanthropy Project, Global Philanthropy Project, Feb. 2021, <https://globalphilanthropyproject.org/2021/02/02/diving-deeper/#lgbti>.

applications they received. This amounts to roughly 35% - an increase over the previous year's cycle due only to the reduced number of participating countries.

The limited funding available for global equality and inclusion initiatives undermines our broader development goals. For example, in just two sectors in India, LGBTQI+ exclusion accounted for an estimated \$30 billion in lost GDP.⁶ Conversely, a strong correlation has been found between the inclusion and enactment of rights for LGBTQI+ people and growth in GDP.⁷ A 2018 study from the Williams Institute found that one enacted law in support of LGBTQI+ people is associated with \$2,065 more in GDP per capita,⁸ as well as a higher value in human development, as measured by the Human Development Index.

The United States has a long path ahead of it to truly champion LGBTQI+ rights. For the United States to be on par with leading government donors in this sector, the U.S. would need to contribute 0.3% of our official development assistance (ODA), which would considerably increase funding for LGBTQI+ rights programs to over \$100 million annually.⁹

Unfortunately, the previous President's Budget Requests (PBRs) have failed to include a clear call for increased investments. Rather, the PBRs and accompanying Congressional Budget Justifications for the State Department's Global Equality Fund and USAID Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons have either flat-funded or requested less funding than a prior year's enacted level. These requests fail to align with the Memorandum's stated importance of foreign assistance for the global LGBTQI+ rights movement and limit the ability of the State Department and USAID to achieve the Administration's goals.

Funding Requests

Fund the State Department's Global Equality Fund (GEF) at \$40 million.

The GEF is a leading public-private partnership of like-minded governments and private sector entities dedicated to protecting and defending the human rights and fundamental freedom of LGBTQI+ persons around the world. The GEF leverages pooled investments across entities, providing over \$100 million to LGBTQI+ organizations in 100 countries in its 10 years of operation. GEF funding has provided leadership and capacity training to LGBTQI+ organizations to build more sustainable movements, as well as safety and security funds to protect LGBTQI+ human rights defenders worldwide.

Through the GEF's funding, over 1,400 human rights defenders and 200 civil society organizations have received emergency assistance, with 99% of beneficiaries reporting that this assistance improved their

⁶ Badgett, M. V. Lee. The Economic Cost of Stigma and the Exclusion of LGBT People: A Case Study of India. World Bank Group; Nordic Trust Fund, 2014, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/527261468035379692/pdf/940400WP0Box380usion0of0LGBT0People.pdf>.
⁷ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/reports/2020/11/16/492936/transforming-u-s-foreign-policy-ensure-dignity-rights-lgbti-people/>

⁸ Badgett, M.V. Lee, et al. "Links Between Economic Development and New Measures of LGBT Inclusion." The Williams Institute, The Williams Institute, Mar. 2018, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Global-Economy-and-LGBT-Inclusion-Mar-2018.pdf>.

⁹ For the U.S. to be on par with the Netherlands, Norway or Sweden in terms of average percentage of our ODA dedicated to LGBTQI+ funding, the U.S. would need to grow to at least \$105 million annually according to the Global Philanthropy Project's Global Resource Report. "2017-2018 Global Resources Report: Government & Philanthropic Support for LGBTI Communities." Global Philanthropy Project, Global Philanthropy Project, 12 Oct. 2021, <https://globalresourcesreport.org/>.

safety and security. In FY 2020 alone, GEF funding trained nearly 2,500 human rights defenders, provided legal aid or assistance to 1,000 individuals from low-income or marginalized communities, and developed more than 500 digital written tools for human rights defense and advocacy. Today, the GEF funds approximately 179 LGBTQI+ organizations around the world and has provided capacity support for successful legal challenges to anti-LGBTQI+ laws.

Congressional support for the GEF has been instrumental in upholding LGBTQI+ rights around the world. Since FY 2019, Congress has tripled the funding available to the GEF, enacting a \$15 million contribution in the FY 2022 Omnibus. Most recently, Congress proposed a U.S. contribution of \$25 million to the GEF in the FY 2023 draft appropriations bills. These enacted and proposed increases have opened up new opportunities for the State Department to bolster the movement for global equality. This includes expanding funding to medium-sized LGBTQI+ organizations, creating a designated fund for transgender rights, and strengthening regional efforts to respond to emergencies. With additional secured investments from Congress, the GEF will also be launching the Global LGBTQI+ Inclusive Democracy and Empowerment (GLIDE) Fund, a mechanism elevating the participation of LGBTQI+ individuals in political institutions, processes, and governance to bolster democratic movements around the world.

Even with these increases, LGBTQI+ funding demands significantly exceed funds available to GEF. In its 2020-2021 global solicitation, the GEF received roughly \$50 million in global funding requests yet lacked the funds to respond to the considerable need from the LGBTQI+ community. The GEF was able to meet 6% of the funding requests it received. With the additional support from Congress in the FY 2022 appropriations bill, the GEF estimates that it will be able to fund approximately 15% of the funding requests it receives. Though this is an increase, the GEF also estimates a drop in the number of funding requests due to a new funding floor of \$750,000 that will reduce the number of organizations able to take on this amount of funding. These shortfalls have undermined the ability of the GEF to provide operating and administrative support to LGBTQI+ organizations - a necessity to sustain the longevity of LGBTQI+ movements - and demonstrated the weaknesses of the humanitarian system for LGBTQI+ inclusion.

Additional funding at the level of \$40 million will enable the GEF to leverage new mechanisms, address funding gaps caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and create longer-standing relationships with LGBTQI+ organizations on the frontlines of decriminalization and other advocacy efforts.

Fund the USAID Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons at \$30 million.

USAID LGBTQI+ programs focus on anti-LGBTQI+ violence, discrimination, stigma, and criminalization. In addition to USAID's Human Rights Grants Program, which responds to urgent or unanticipated human rights threats to LGBTQI+ individuals, USAID hosts the LGBTI Global Human Rights Initiative (GHRI), a public-private funding mechanism to which other governments and entities also contribute. USAID's programs have supported Bangladeshi civil society advocates in securing a third gender option in the country's 2021 National Census, anti-LGBTQI+ stigma and discrimination workshops with Guatemalan government officials, and safety and security toolkits for at-risk human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁰

¹⁰ Leonelli, Stephen. "5 Ways USAID Promotes LGBTQI+ Inclusion around the World." Medium, U.S. Agency for International Development, 5 Aug. 2021, <https://medium.com/usaid-2030/5-ways-usaid-promotes-lgbtqi-inclusion-around-the-world-dd665506c7ab>.

Similar to the GEF, Congress has increased funding for USAID's LGBTQI+ programs since FY 2019, enacting \$10 million for the program in the FY 2022 Omnibus. Most recently, Congress proposed \$25 million for USAID's LGBTQI+ programs in the FY 2023 draft appropriations bills. The additional funding has allowed USAID to build stronger partnerships through the GHRI, set up 7 emergency mechanisms, and develop a series of programs focused on strategic communications and social behavior changes for LGBTQI+ rights in two regions of the world. The Inclusive Development Hub's LGBTQI+ programs are also developing sector-specific guidance for LGBTQI+ inclusion across the agency's bureaus, including in education and food security and resilience.

Despite the increases, USAID's LGBTQI+ programs continue to face high demands for funding. In a July 2021 House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, Administrator Power recognized that USAID's LGBTQI+ programs were only able to fund roughly one-sixth, or 16%, of the proposals USAID received from missions. In just one example, the Human Rights Grants Programs alone received proposals estimated to total up to \$13 million. Of the 13 expressions of interest for the program, USAID was able to partially fund 5 of the requests due to funding gaps within the program.

USAID's public-private Global Development Alliance mechanisms are also stymied by the funding available to the agency's LGBTQI+ programs. One of the mechanisms will be expanding its reach from 9 to approximately 12 or 13 countries, while the newly-announced mechanisms will fund in an additional 8 countries. This means that the Global Development Alliance mechanisms are only available in roughly 20 countries. Compared to the number of countries in which USAID has programs and in which same-sex sexual relations are criminalized, the disparity of funding is alarming and limits engagement from U.S. missions looking to support LGBTQI+ civil society.

Additional funding would enable the agency to increase its investments in civil society organizations in areas of the world seeing increasing attacks on LGBTQI+ rights. This includes contributing to USAID's new Sustainable Inclusive Development for Equity (SIDE) initiative, the Inclusive Development Hub's first intersectional, capacity building and rapid response small grants mechanism. Increased funding for USAID's LGBTQI+ programs will enable the program to make a larger contribution to this mechanism, allowing funding to reach LGBTQI+ individuals with a variety of intersectional identities, including disability and indigenous status. USAID's LGBTQI+ programs also hope to increase funding for economic livelihood and emergency response efforts and further expand the Global Development Alliance into an additional 5 countries.

As you consider your budget for FY 2024, we hope you will make these crucial investments in LGBTQI+ human rights that help to make our world safer and more secure for all its citizens, no matter who they are or whom they love. We welcome the Biden-Harris Administration's commitments to global LGBTQI+ rights and look forward to opportunities to advance them together. Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

1. ADL (Anti-Defamation League)
2. Advocates for Youth
3. Aids Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC)
4. ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal
5. Ameinu
6. American Atheists
7. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
8. American Jewish World Service
9. American Society for Reproductive Medicine
10. amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research
11. Amnesty International USA
12. Association of LGBTQ+ Corporate Directors
13. Better World Campaign
14. CA LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network
15. Campus Pride
16. Carolina Jews for Justice
17. Catholics for Choice
18. Center for Biological Diversity
19. Center for Disability Rights
20. Center for HIV Law and Policy
21. Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)
22. Center for Reproductive Rights
23. Center for Values in International Development
24. CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
25. Church World Service
26. Coastal Roots Farm
27. Council for Global Equality
28. Equality California
29. Equipundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice
30. Family Equality
31. Fast-Track Cities Institute
32. Fenway Health
33. FORGE, Inc.
34. Fòs Feminista
35. Foundation Earth
36. Friends Committee on National Legislation
37. Friends of the Global Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
38. Gender Action
39. GLAAD
40. Global Justice Center
41. GLSEN
42. Guttmacher Institute

43. Health Global Access Project, Inc.
44. Heartland Alliance International
45. Housing Works, Inc.
46. Human Rights Campaign
47. Human Rights First
48. IKAR
49. Immigration Equality Action Fund
50. interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth
51. International Association of Providers of AIDS Care
52. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
53. International Community of Women Living with HIV North America
54. Ipas
55. IPPF - International Planned Parenthood Federation
56. Jewish Council for Public Affairs
57. Jewish Women International (JWI)
58. JSI
59. JYCA
60. Keshet
61. LGBT Technology Partnership & Institute
62. Los Angeles LGBT Center
63. Management Sciences for Health
64. MPact Global Action
65. NARAL Pro-Choice America
66. National Center for Lesbian Rights
67. National Center for Transgender Equality
68. National Coalition for LGBTQ Health
69. National Council of Jewish Women
70. National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)
71. National Organization for Women
72. NQAPIA (National Queer API Alliance)
73. Oasis Legal Services
74. ORAM - Organization for Refugee, Asylum and Migration
75. Out & Equal Workplace Advocates
76. OutRight Action International
77. PAI
78. Pathfinder International
79. PFLAG National
80. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
81. Population Connection Action Fund
82. Population Institute
83. Population Services International (PSI)
84. Presbyterian Church (USA)
85. Prevention Access Campaign
86. Rainbow Railroad

87. Reconstructing Judaism
88. Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
89. Reframe Health and Justice
90. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
91. SOJOURN: The Southern Jewish Resource Network for Gender and Sexual Diversity
92. Synergía - Initiatives for Human Rights
93. T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
94. The Global Justice Institute
95. The International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights
96. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center
97. The Trevor Project
98. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law
99. The Workers Circle
100. Treatment Action Group
101. True Colors United
102. U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus
103. Union for Reform Judaism
104. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
105. United Nations Association of the USA
106. Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
107. White Ribbon Alliance
108. Women's Refugee Commission
109. Woodhull Freedom Foundation
110. World Education