



September 5, 2007

Dear Senator:

As you take up consideration of the FY08 State/Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, we write on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to urge your active support for essential funding for urgent humanitarian and development activities. This support is informed by extensive experience among some of the most vulnerable people around the world. In solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need, we urge you to ensure that critical funding is included in the FY 2008 appropriations for key foreign aid priorities that include:

Millennium Challenge Account/Corporation: The full Senate committee mark reduces funding for the Millennium Challenge Corporation to \$1.2 billion, a figure that is far below the President's request of \$3.0 billion and \$700 million below the committee's mark from last year. We urge Senate leaders to fund the MCC at a minimum of \$1.8 billion, the level contained in the FY08 House bill. The cut in funding proposed in the Senate State/Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill would prevent the MCC from keeping its current commitments to life-saving compacts that are ready to be signed. Many vulnerable countries, particularly in Africa, have responded to our nation's call to make key reforms that include improved governance, anti-corruption measures, expanded rights for underrepresented groups such as women and rural landholders, and commitments to social investments in health and sanitation. Unless sufficient funds are provided for the MCA, important reforms may lose momentum in bringing meaningful development to some of our poorest brothers and sisters.

HIV and AIDS: While we support the overall funding level for HIV and AIDS in the Senate Appropriations Committee's approved version of the FY08 State/Foreign Appropriations bill, we strongly urge the Senate to reinstate designated funding for prevention of sexually transmitted HIV through abstinence and fidelity education in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR included a 7% allocation (one-third of HIV and AIDS prevention funds) for abstinence-before-marriage programs. The bill abandons this commitment, even though there is a global shortage of funding available for this critical and effective method for preventing sexually-transmitted HIV.

We also urge you to strike language in the Senate committee-passed bill contained in Sec. 622 that would rescind the Mexico City Policy, which prevents U.S. family planning assistance from being channeled through groups that perform and promote abortion as family planning. We urge restoration of the Kemp-Kasten Amendment in existing law, which prohibits support for organizations that support or help manage programs using coerced abortion and sterilization; the committee-passed bill would undermine this

Page Two
Letter to U.S. Senate
September 5, 2007

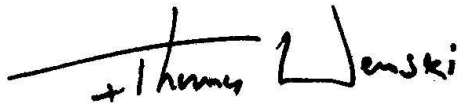
provision of law. On both these issues, we urge you to follow the counsel by our Bishops' Conference offered in a companion letter.

USCCB and CRS support strong levels of funding for all poverty-focused development programs, including funding for the core poverty accounts as well as the new direction on aid to Colombia with its focus on humanitarian needs, judicial sector improvements, and sustainable rural development.

In sum, the persistence of abject hunger, poverty, and disease in God's world is a significant moral challenge. Reliable programs that have proven results in combating or reducing poverty and disease deserve the full support of the U.S. Congress.

With sincere good wishes for your work on behalf of the poor, we remain,

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Thomas G. Wenski in black ink, featuring a stylized 'T' and 'W'.

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman,
Committee on International Policy

Handwritten signature of Ken Hackett in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Ken Hackett
President
Catholic Relief Services