



July 14, 2023

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Gregory Meeks
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, Chairman McCaul, and Ranking Member Meeks,

We write on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to express some principles that we hope will guide Congress as it develops legislation that would continue the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Principle One: Respect for PEPFAR's extraordinary work to date

We write to affirm PEPFAR's extraordinary life-saving work to date, and to express our strong, ongoing support for its goals and hope for its robust continuation. So far, PEPFAR has saved millions of lives, prevented millions of new infections, and supported 7.1 million orphans and vulnerable children around the world.¹ PEPFAR has established and maintained U.S. leadership in the worldwide fight against HIV, as well as tuberculosis and malaria, and may well be one of the most successful international assistance programs that the United States has ever undertaken. The Catholic Church is a major provider of HIV/AIDS-related services worldwide and has long shared PEPFAR's foundational goals of saving lives, caring for the infected and the affected, and preventing the spread of this deadly disease. We therefore continue to strongly support these goals and their expression in PEPFAR.

Principle Two: Certain aspects of PEPFAR are inconsistent with moral teaching

We reiterate our previously stated and ongoing, principled concerns about certain aspects of PEPFAR that are inconsistent with Catholic teaching, notably the promotion and distribution of condoms. Such approaches can diminish the value that persons attribute to one another and even increase risk-taking behavior, which should be considered in pursuing holistic and authentic solutions. We therefore have not supported those aspects of the program, and we continue not to. To the extent that we participate in PEPFAR ourselves, we do not implement these elements of the program, affirming instead that abstinence and fidelity are principal components of prevention education in order to help curb the spread of HIV. We also continue to support conscience protections corresponding to these moral concerns.

¹ [The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief \(PEPFAR\) | KFF](#)

Principle Three: Bipartisanship to assure protection of all human life

We strongly urge bipartisan cooperation in efforts to ensure that the life-saving work of PEPFAR will continue and that the program fully respects the inherent dignity of all people, including preborn children. The life-saving work of PEPFAR should never be entangled with the promotion of abortion, a grave evil and the opposite of lifesaving care. All appropriate steps should be taken by lawmakers, along with the Administration in its implementation and oversight of PEPFAR, to support that goal. Consistent with this principle, we strongly appeal to you that the Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance policy be applied to this program. Finally, we ask for special attention to provisions that are set to expire on September 30, 2023, including the allocation for the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program.

On World AIDS Day in 2021, Pope Francis noted that many people who suffer from AIDS lack access to necessary treatment, and he shared his hope “that there might be a renewed commitment in solidarity to guarantee fair and effective health care.”² Because we join in that hope, we call on Congress to demonstrate renewed solidarity through bipartisan efforts to maintain PEPFAR while ensuring respect for all human life, and we stand ready to collaborate with you in that work.

Thank you for your kind consideration of these principles, and may God bless you and guide you in this important endeavor. Please be assured of our prayers throughout.

Sincerely,

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Most Rev. David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace



Most Rev. Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Arlington
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities



Mr. Sean Callahan
President and CEO
Catholic Relief Services

² [General Audience of 1st December 2021: Catechesis on Saint Joseph - 3. Saint Joseph: just man and husband of Mary | Francis \(vatican.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francis/general_audience_francis/2021/12/01/20211201_ga_120121_1a.html)