

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to express grave concern about the recent tide of anti-LGBT rhetoric and legislation in Africa and around the world. As documented by the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, at least 78 countries have penalties for adult consensual sexual conduct. However, we are especially concerned about the enactment of draconian laws in Uganda and Nigeria in recent weeks and the effect that may have in other countries, namely Kenya, Malawi, where legislatures are reportedly beginning to consider similar draft laws. Such laws not only violate human rights, they endanger lives and undermine public health efforts, most notably programs to address HIV/AIDS, which must be conducted in a non-discriminatory manner in order to be effective.

We are pleased by your announcement that the United States is beginning an internal review of our relationship with the Government of Uganda to ensure that all dimensions of America's engagement, including assistance programs and upholding our anti-discrimination policies and principles and reflect our values. As the Administration moves forward with the review, we encourage you to consider the following recommendations:

- 1) Expand the review to include not only Uganda, but all countries in which the United States is engaged in assistance efforts.
- 2) Reprogram assistance, where feasible, away from governments that support discriminatory laws, and towards non-governmental and civil society organizations, while protecting access to and preventing disruption of needed assistance.
- 3) Conduct a thorough review of United States bilateral assistance through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to identify partnerships with organizations which may have supported discriminatory laws.
- 4) Empower United States embassies, along with embassies of foreign nations, to protect individuals endangered by anti-LGBT laws in the form of assistance, support and safety measures, including United States Government employees, United States Government implementing partner employees, and Peace Corps volunteers.

5) Further strengthen United States diplomatic authority in concert with the United Nations and Regional Intergovernmental Organizations, such as the African Union, to support the repeal of discriminatory laws, to dissuade the adoption of anti-LGBT legislation, and to bolster human rights-based policies that support, not persecute, marginalized populations.

While we must recognize the sovereignty of all nations, we must also ensure that international human rights standards are upheld everywhere, including the right to health. We thank you and the Administration for the commitment to these issues and share your conviction to ensuring that the United States will continue to stand against any efforts to marginalize, criminalize, and penalize vulnerable persons in any society.

Sincerely,


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress


Karen Bass
Member of Congress


Eleanor Holmes-Norton
Member of Congress


Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

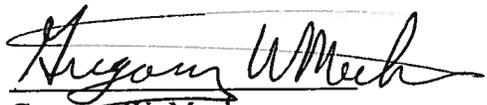

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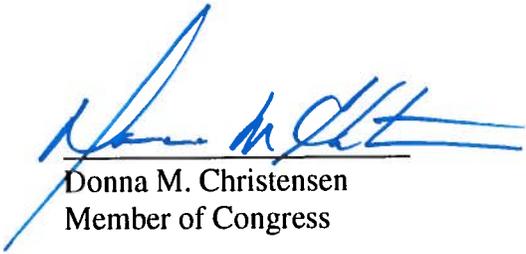
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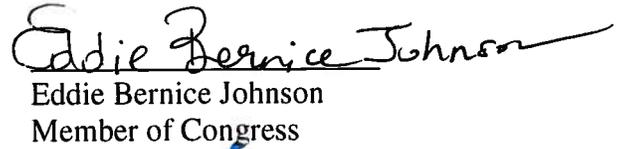
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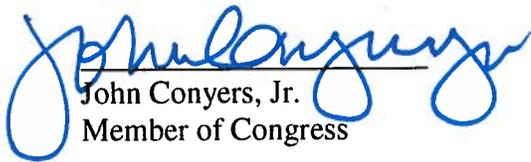
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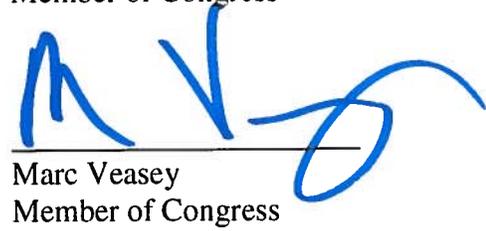
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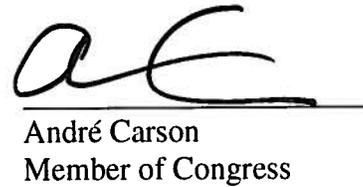
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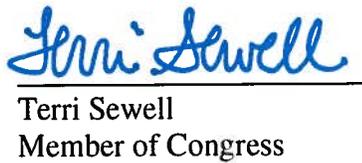
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