

June 26, 2008

Dear Senator:

We write as religious leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with a special concern and passion for the well being of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. We serve on the International Policy Committee, which is part of the ELCA Conference of Bishops that includes 65 synodical leaders in all geographic regions of the country, accountable to 5 million Lutherans in the United States. All 65 ELCA synods have a companion relationship with at least one Lutheran Church in another country, many of whom are severely affected by the AIDS pandemic that continues to claim more than 2 million lives every year.

**We urge you to support a robust, bi-partisan U.S. Global HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2008 as it comes to the Senate floor for consideration. This bill presents a critical opportunity for the U.S. Congress to transition current emergency-focused AIDS programming into a sustainable, integrated effort to save lives, restore hope and build true security in many of the poorest countries in the world.**

We applaud the U.S. Government's historic and bold commitment, announced by President Bush in 2003, to fighting HIV and AIDS. The \$15 billion dollar commitment over five years has produced impressive results: more than 1.4 million lives saved, care provided for more than 6.6 million persons infected or affected by HIV/AIDS including 2.7 million orphans and vulnerable children, and counseling and testing provided for more than 33 million, including 10 million pregnant women.

We have witnessed the meaning of these statistics in the lives of our partners in other countries: individuals rejoice for a second chance at life because AIDS is no longer a death sentence, children orphaned or otherwise vulnerable look forward to the opportunities of tomorrow, and communities once devastated by the pandemic celebrate the promise of a brighter future. Still, with at least 16 million additional persons in need of treatment by 2013, more than 15 million children orphaned by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa alone, and more than 2.5 million new infections per year, the need for enhanced U.S. leadership is great.

**We applaud efforts of the Senate Leadership in negotiating with concerned parties to ensure that this critical legislation makes historic improvements to the U.S. Government's current commitment to fight AIDS in the world, while maintaining strong bi-partisan support.**

We support passage of the 2008 U.S. Global HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act that includes targets for prevention, treatment and care that fulfill the U.S. commitment to the achievement of universal access by 2010, as President Bush committed at the G8 summit in 2005. In order to meet such targets and sustain them, we know a greater emphasis on strengthening health systems and training health care workers in the hardest hit countries is essential. Specifically, we urge Congress to ensure that the 2008 U.S. Global HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act supports pre-service training and retention for at least 140,000 new primary care doctors and nurses.

The equitable U.S. share of the escalated effort needed to achieve universal access, including an enhanced focus on health systems, would require an authorization level of at least \$50 billion over five years. Such a financial commitment is not only consistent with our nation's deeply held moral values and humanitarian generosity; it also represents an investment in the security and safety of our world through the strengthening of vulnerable communities.

Finally, we share a special concern for the millions of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) who have been infected or affected by the AIDS pandemic. Many of our partners in Africa historically

have depended upon their extended family structure to absorb orphaned children. The sheer number of children in need today has made this impossible and is the cause of increasing community tension and strain. We support the ten percent funding designation dedicated to OVC, believe all children in severely affected communities should be considered vulnerable, and urge Congress to allow a portion of the ten percent designation to be used for administrative purposes to enhance and improve the work of a full-time OVC special advisor.

**As religious leaders, we look to you as Members of Congress representing the people of our great country to pass a strong bi-partisan bill to ensure that this critical program continues to bring life to millions of individuals and brighter futures for thousands of communities throughout the world.**

For more information, please contact Kimberly Stietz at [kim.stietz@elca.org](mailto:kim.stietz@elca.org) or 202.626.7942.

With thanks and prayers for your work and service on behalf of the American people.

Sincerely,

Bishop Peter Rogness  
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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bishop Philip L. Hougen  
Member, International Policy Committee  
Southeastern Iowa Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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