

September 21, 2023

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Director, Office of Management and Budget  
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Director Young:

The undersigned 108 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) 2025.

We have greatly appreciated the stated commitments of the Biden Administration to protecting and promoting LGBTQI+ rights both at home and around the world. President Biden has repeatedly made clear - whether in his Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World ("Memorandum"), Executive Order 13985 on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, Executive Order 14075 on Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals, the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, and the Memorandum on Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships, among others - that LGBTQI+ rights are a core component of the Administration's foreign policy goals. We have welcomed these statements 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, these policies are only as effective as their implementation allows. To do this, the Biden Administration must finally align its financial investments to meet the dangerous moment facing the global LGBTQI+ community.

Today, sixty-four countries continue to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts. Twelve of these countries have jurisdictions in which same-sex relations are punishable by death.<sup>1</sup> Many more countries continue to be dangerous, and even deadly, for LGBTQI+ people even after the implementation of protective laws. And though several countries have made great strides in promoting LGBTQI+ rights – including Caribbean courts striking down criminalization statutes in Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Barbados in 2022; Chile's legalization of same-sex marriage in 2021; and Kenya's historic ruling allowing the registration of LGBTQI+ organizations – opponents of LGBTQI+ rights have been emboldened and anti-rights groups, including those from the United States, are pouring money into advancing homophobia and transphobia around the world.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, there is a wave of anti-LGBTQI+ persecution, threatening the decades-long progress made by LGBTQI+ human rights defenders. In Uganda, the Parliament passed its draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act that increased already existing criminal penalties for same-sex sexual conduct and required a "duty to

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<sup>1</sup> Human Dignity Trust. <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Perkins, Tom. "US religious right at center of anti-LGBTQ+ message pushed around the world." The Guardian, July 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/09/us-religious-right-lgbtq-global-culture-fronts>

report” LGBTQI+ individuals, spurring a wave of evictions and arrests. This legislation has inspired other legislatures on the continent to introduce or pass similar bills, including in Ghana. In Russia, President Putin has continued to crack down on the LGBTQI+ community, signing into law both an expansion of its so-called LGBTQI+ propaganda law and banning gender affirming care. Meanwhile, countries like Uzbekistan and Egypt continue to use the practice of forced anal examinations, a form of torture, against those in the LGBTQI+ community for criminal prosecutions.

These attacks and others in countries around the globe have forced LGBTQI+ rights advocates to conduct emergency response campaigns while navigating everyday barriers to basic services amidst an environment with limited 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. For many LGBTQI+ organizations, no funding was available within their own country, including many countries where same-sex relations remain illegal.

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.

The limited funding available for global equality and inclusion initiatives undermines broader national security and development goals. For example, in just two sectors in India, LGBTQI+ exclusion accounted for an estimated \$30 billion in lost GDP.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, a strong correlation has been found between the inclusion and enactment of rights for LGBTQI+ people and growth in GDP.<sup>5</sup> 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,<sup>6</sup> as well as a higher value in human development, as measured by the Human Development Index.

### **Funding Requests**

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 at least 0.3% of our official development assistance (ODA), which would considerably increase funding for LGBTQI+

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<sup>3</sup> “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/#lbgti>.

<sup>4</sup> 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>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/reports/2020/11/16/492936/transforming-u-s-foreign-policy-ensure-dignity-rights-lgbti-people/>

<sup>6</sup> 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>.

rights programs to over \$100 million annually.<sup>7</sup> According to the Amsterdam Network,<sup>8</sup> LGBTQI+ supportive governments should aim to increase the percentage of their foreign assistance to LGBTQI+ rights work to 1% over the next ten years.

Unfortunately, the previous President's Budget Requests (PBRs) have failed to correspond with the stated positions of the Biden Administration on global LGBTQI+ rights. 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 the prior year's enacted level. These requests are wholly insufficient to implement the stated policies of the Biden Administration and limit our ability to effectively combat the threats facing the global LGBTQI+ community.

Any increase in the FY 2025 funding levels for global LGBTQI+ rights programs should not come at the expense of other poverty-focused development, global health, humanitarian aid, women's empowerment and gender equality programs, or programs focused on other marginalized communities. Overall increases in the Democracy Fund are also warranted to ensure that marginalized population programs are funded at levels commensurate with need.

### **Fund the State Department's Global Equality Fund at no less than \$40 million.**

Located at the State Department and run through the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), the GEF is a leading and highly leveraged public-private partnership of 19 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 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 more than 175 LGBTQI+ organizations around the world.

The U.S. contribution of \$25 million to the GEF in the FY 2023 appropriations bill was a historic highwater mark for U.S. support of LGBTQI+ rights around the world and was secured due to the strong Congressional support for the GEF. The increased investments in the GEF 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

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<sup>7</sup> 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 over \$100 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/>.

<sup>8</sup> The Amsterdam Network is a global coalition of LGBTQI+ national organizations working with their governments to ensure the attention to the human rights of LGBTQI+ people around the world.

rights, investing in queer women's movements, and strengthening regional efforts to respond to emergencies. As a part of the Summit for Democracy, the GEF also launched 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 just one of the program's calls for proposals, the GEF received more than 50 submissions. Funding needs of the top 16 proposals totaled roughly \$22m alone, of which the GEF was only able to support roughly \$7.5m due to funding constraints. Given the other solicitations and funding demands of the GEF, it is estimated that the GEF is able to meet just 10% of the total funding requests it receives, which is less than other similar programs within the State Department which are able to fund an estimated 20% of funding requests.

Additional investments in the GEF would enable the State Department to strengthen the capacity of LGBTQI+ organizations, both through administrative and operational means; build networks of intermediary funders to sustain regional and global LGBTQI+ movements; attend to the increasing security threats, particularly the rise of violence, facing LGBTQI+ organizations and human rights defenders; and support historically underfunded regions of the world, including the Middle East and North Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

**Fund USAID Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons at no less than \$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. Administrator Power recognized that USAID's programs for marginalized groups, like LGBTQI+ persons, "come on the basis of demands from our more than 80 missions around the world and where the need is the greatest, where the vulnerability is the greatest." These programs have supported LGBTQI+ economic empowerment and inclusion in Serbia's workplaces and business communities, the development of a national agenda for Dominican LGBTQI+ civil society groups, and activities in Lesotho to counter gender-based violence impacting LGBTQI+ individuals.

Similar to the GEF, Congress has increased funding for USAID's LGBTQI+ programs since FY 2019, securing a record \$25m for the program in FY 2023. The additional funding has allowed USAID to build stronger partnerships through the GHRI, set up 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. Last year, USAID was also able to launch the Rainbow Fund, which enabled missions to apply directly for LGBTQI+ inclusive development programs.

Despite the increases, USAID's LGBTQI+ programs continue to face high demands for funding, particularly with the recent launch of the Agency's LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy. It is estimated that current funding is only able to support roughly one-third of the received demand from

USAID missions. For example, the Rainbow Fund received 26 expressions of interest from across 24 country missions and the Human Rights Grants Programs received 9 expressions of interest for the program. Overall, the LGBTQI+ portfolio will only be able to provide a total of \$7.7m in FY 2022 Democracy Funds to twelve missions through these two mechanisms this year, despite significantly higher funding requests.

Funding gaps for USAID's LGBTQI+ programs limit the geographical reach of LGBTQI+ focused inclusive development programs. While USAID has been able to expand opportunities for LGBTQI+ funding to new countries over the last two fiscal years, they still only reach an estimated one-third of missions around the world. 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 inclusive development programs. In addition to programming on education, economic livelihoods support, and health care, stronger investments in LGBTQI+ programming could move toward responding to the increased demand for emergency support and rapid response to anti-rights campaigns targeting LGBTQI+ communities. Recently, USAID invested over \$1.3m in emergency support to communities in several countries and more funding could expand this work. Stronger investments would also deepen contributions to USAID's Inclusive Development and Equitable Assistance (IDEA) award, the Inclusive Development Hub's first intersectional, capacity building and rapid response small grants mechanism for those identifying across a broad range of marginalized populations.

As you consider the President's Budget Request for FY 2025, we hope that the Biden Administration will finally request sufficient resources for global LGBTQI+ programs that make our world safer and more secure for all its citizens, no matter who they are or whom they love. We look forward to the Biden-Harris Administration's commitments to global LGBTQI+ rights becoming action and advancing this work together. Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

1. Human Rights Campaign
2. Council for Global Equality
3. Advocates for Youth
4. ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal
5. Ameinu
6. American Academy of HIV Medicine
7. American Atheists
8. American Jewish World Service
9. American Psychological Association
10. amfAR
11. Amnesty International USA
12. Association of LGBTQ+ Corporate Directors
13. AVAC
14. CA LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network

15. Campus Pride
16. Catholics for Choice
17. Center for Biological Diversity
18. Center for Values in International Development
19. CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers
20. Church World Service
21. Equality California
22. Equality Federation
23. Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice
24. Family Equality
25. Foreign Policy for America
26. FORGE, Inc.
27. Fòs Feminista
28. Foundation Earth
29. Friends Committee on National Legislation
30. GLAAD
31. GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality
32. Global Justice Center
33. Guttmacher Institute
34. Health GAP (Global Access Project)
35. Heartland Alliance International
36. HIV Medicine Association
37. Housing Works, Inc.
38. Howard Brown Health
39. Human Rights First
40. Immigration Equality Action Fund
41. InReach
42. interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth
43. Interconnected Justice
44. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
45. International Institute on Race, Equality, and Human Rights
46. International Planned Parenthood Federation
47. International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
48. Ipas
49. JSI
50. Just Detention International
51. Lawyers for Good Government (L4GG)
52. LGBT Technology Partnership
53. LGBTQ+ Victory Institute
54. Los Angeles LGBT Center
55. MADRE
56. Moving Traditions
57. MPact Global Action
58. MSI Reproductive Choices

59. NARAL Pro-Choice America
60. NASTAD
61. National Black Justice Coalition
62. National Center for Lesbian Rights
63. National Center for Transgender Equality
64. National Coalition for LGBTQ Health
65. National Council of Jewish Women
66. National LGBT Cancer Network
67. National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)
68. National Organization for Women
69. National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
70. NMAC
71. Oasis Legal Services
72. ORAM - Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration
73. Outright International
74. PAI
75. Pathfinder International
76. PFLAG National
77. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
78. Population Connection Action Fund
79. Population Institute
80. Population Services International
81. Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
82. Prevention Access Campaign
83. Prism United
84. Rainbow Railroad
85. Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
86. Reframe Health and Justice
87. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
88. SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
89. Silver State Equality
90. Society for Humanistic Judaism
91. Synergía - Initiatives for Human Rights
92. T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
93. The Fenway Institute
94. The Global Justice Institute
95. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center
96. The Shalom Center
97. The Trevor Project
98. The Williams Institute
99. Treatment Action Group
100. U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus
101. Union for Reform Judaism
102. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

103. United Nations Association of the USA
104. Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
105. White Ribbon Alliance
106. Whitman-Walker Institute
107. Women's Refugee Commission
108. Woodhull Freedom Foundation