

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

We write to raise serious concerns about the “Anti-Homosexual Bill” introduced in Uganda’s parliament earlier this month. This egregious bill represents one of the most extreme anti-equality measures ever proposed in any country and would create a legal pretext for depriving lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Ugandans of their liberty, and even their lives. Particularly given the United States’ substantial contribution to Uganda through the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), we believe swift action is necessary to ensure Ugandan leaders understand this bill is wholly unacceptable and antithetical to democratic values.

As you may know, the “Anti-Homosexual Bill” would increase the penalty for “same sex sexual acts” to life in prison, limit the distribution of information on HIV through a provision criminalizing the “promotion of homosexuality,” and establish the crime of “aggravated homosexuality” punishable by death for anyone in Uganda who is HIV-positive and has consensual same-sex relations. Further, the bill includes a provision that could lead to the imprisonment for up to three years of anyone who fails to report within 24 hours the identities of everyone they know who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, or who supports human rights for people who are, to the government.


Last year, PEPFAR spending in Uganda amounted to almost \$300 million, representing approximately 2.6% of the total Ugandan economy. According to these estimates, the U.S. spends approximately \$12 dollars per person in Uganda through PEPFAR. Dr. Eric Goosby, Ambassador at Large and Global AIDS Coordinator, has made it clear that he believes efforts to combat discrimination against LGBT individuals are an important part of PEPFAR’s mission to combat global HIV/AIDS. During his Senate confirmation hearing in June, Dr. Goosby stated, “if confirmed, I look forward to working with field and headquarters staff, Congress and others in the Administration to ensure that PEPFAR effectively targets the most at-risk and vulnerable populations - including LGBT populations - with culturally appropriate prevention, care and treatment interventions.” The “Anti-Homosexual Bill” would clearly impede Dr. Goosby and PEPFAR’s goals by seriously compromising efforts to reach LGBT communities in Uganda. We believe it would undermine the substantial U.S. contribution to Uganda through PEPFAR and raise serious questions about the effectiveness of this global health investment.

Madame Secretary, we applaud your leadership on LGBT issues and steadfast commitment to human rights. It is our fervent hope that you will use every means possible to convey to Ugandan leaders that this bill is appalling, reckless, and should be withdrawn immediately. We stand ready to work with you in addressing this matter and look forward to your response. If you have any questions, please contact Amber Shipley of Rep. Baldwin's staff at 202-225-2906.

Sincerely,



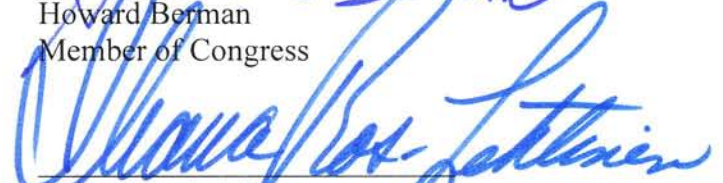
Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



Gary Ackerman
Member of Congress



Howard Berman
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

cc: Ambassador Jerry P. Lanier, Embassy of the United States, Kampala, Uganda
Dr. Eric Goosby, the Global AIDS Coordinator