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October 2, 2013

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

The Honorable Bob Corker
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

The Honorable Ed Royce
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Eliot Engel
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), we welcome the introduction of the *PEPFAR Stewardship and Oversight Act of 2013*. We appreciate your leadership and bipartisanship in drafting this important legislation to reiterate and continue our nation's commitment to combating HIV/AIDS worldwide.

The legislation as introduced continues to build on the foundational goals and policies that led to the historic success of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), one of the most successful foreign aid programs that the United States has ever undertaken. From its inception, PEPFAR has enjoyed broad bi-partisan support. This political consensus must continue in order to preserve PEPFAR's inclusive and multi-sectoral approach, which has given hope to so many people suffering from this deadly disease.

The Catholic Church is a major provider of AIDS services worldwide. As Pope Benedict XVI said in connection with World AIDS Day in 2012: "I encourage the many projects in the context of the ecclesial mission that are being promoted to eliminate this scourge." Pope Francis certainly shares this deep concern. As a Cardinal he demonstrated compassion for those with HIV-AIDS by visiting a hospice to kiss and wash the feet of 12 AIDS patients.

In many countries, the Catholic Church and other faith communities are providing care, treatment, and support, especially in the most isolated communities. In 2004, a CRS-led coalition called AIDSRelief began implementing a major PEPFAR grant in partnership with local Church institutions and other organizations in ten countries. CRS has supported 19 local partners working through 276 health facilities and delivered HIV care and treatment to more than 700,000 people, including nearly 400,000 who enrolled in lifesaving antiretroviral therapy. CRS is proud to have successfully transferred these programs to local partners in nine countries.

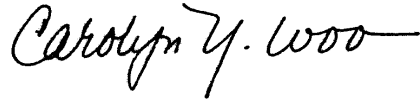
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We appreciate your continued support for addressing the critical health needs of the poor around the world, and we look forward to working with you on this legislation to support the vital work of this life-saving initiative.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace



Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
President
Catholic Relief Services