

December 21, 2005

Representative Kay Granger
U.S. House of Representatives
440 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2304

Dear Representative Granger:

We, the undersigned organizations urge you to co-sponsor H.R. 4188, the Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act of 2005, introduced by Representatives McCollum, Ramstad, Oberstar and Shays. This legislation will reauthorize and gradually increase funding to voluntary family planning programs administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Voluntary family planning programs like those carried out by USAID are critical to improving health care, empowering women and protecting the global environment. By funding international family planning programs, the United States can significantly stem the rise of poverty, hunger, environmental destruction, and political instability that comes with poor health care and rapid population growth.

Supporting international family planning programs saves lives, money, and natural resources. Providing access to modern contraception in less developed countries could prevent 1.4 million infant deaths and 142,000 maternal deaths annually. In Latin America, a \$1 investment in family planning saves \$12 in other health and related costs. Family planning helps preserve vital natural resources by slowing rapid population growth. At current fertility rates, the world's population could double from 6 to 12 billion in the next 55 years. Such an increase will place enormous pressure on natural resources and exacerbate many environmental problems including the loss of wildlife habitat, fisheries depletion, air and water pollution and climate change.

The good news is that we know what works. Past family planning investments by the U.S. Agency for International Development have delivered contraception and health care education to millions of people in more than 70 countries around the world. As a result of U.S.-sponsored family planning programs, countries as varied as Mexico, Thailand, Korea and Tunisia have seen population growth rates slow and economic prosperity rise.

In addition, family planning programs have proven to be a highly effective way to promote healthier families. Such programs are the most cost-effective intervention to avoid the transmission of HIV. Providing increased access to modern contraception in less developed countries could prevent 1.4 million infant deaths and 142,000 maternal deaths annually. Further, as President George W. Bush has stated, one of the best ways to prevent abortion is by providing quality voluntary family planning programs to help women plan their pregnancies.

Please lend your support to these critical issues and co-sponsor H.R. 4188 Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Foundation for AIDS Research
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Audubon
CARE
Center for Health and Gender Equity
Center for Women Policy Studies
Centre for Development and Population Activities
Citizens for Global Solutions
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
Engender Health
The Episcopal Church
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global AIDS Alliance
Global Health Council
The Hunger Project
International Center for Research on Women
Izaak Walton League of America
John Snow, Inc

National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Jewish Women
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
National Wildlife Federation
Pathfinder International
Population Action International
Presbyterian Church USA
Sierra Club
Student Campaign for Child Survival
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

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