

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 7, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to request you include \$15 million for the Office of the Senior Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Coordinator at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in your upcoming FY 2016 budget request. This funding will provide this newly created position with the resources necessary to continue your foreign policy priority of advancing the human rights of LGBT Persons around the world.

In recent years and months your administration has made significant statements of commitment to the human rights of LGBT persons around the world. The December 2011 Presidential Memorandum, entitled "International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons" was followed by the USAID LGBT Vision for Action. This spring, your office appointed at USAID its first ever Senior LGBT Coordinator, holding the most senior LGBT exclusive portfolio among foreign affairs agencies. This summer, the White House convened the first ever Forum on Global LGBT Human Rights.

However, this past year has seen tragic backsliding on the human rights of LGBT persons in countries such as Uganda and Nigeria, following the passage of heinous anti-LGBT legislation. Many other countries appear on the verge of passing or increasing enforcement of similar legislation. While short-term diplomatic efforts have had some positive impacts, we must recognize that any such gains will also be short term as long as the countries at issue sustain prevailing high rates of homophobia throughout their citizenry.

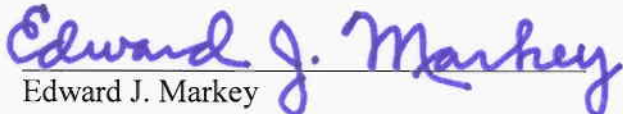
To address these high rates of homophobia and ensure more lasting progress in protection and advancement of the human rights of LGBT persons around the world, at least two long term investments are critical: increasing the capacity of local LGBT focused civil society organizations, and investing in a strategy of LGBT-affirming messaging. We believe that the Office of the Senior LGBT Coordinator is the appropriate avenue through which to make many of these two long term investments. Therefore, we request that you ensure this office is adequately resourced by including additional funding in the FY16 budget request.


Your administration has demonstrated a clear and historic commitment to stand for justice and equality for all people. We look forward to working with you to continue that work.

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Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

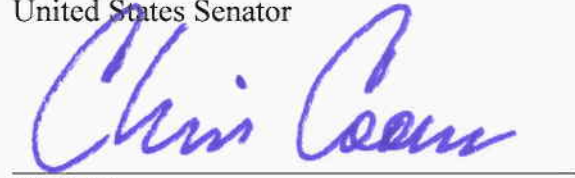

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


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United States Senator


Al Franken
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United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator


Chris Coons
United States Senator


Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

CC:
The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

CC:
The Honorable Rajiv Shah
Administrator
US Agency for International Development
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004