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May 6, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, and President of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), we write to support the Global Fragility Act of 2019 (H.R. 2116). Pope Francis has continuously urged developed nations to reach out to the peripheries of our world and to serve the most vulnerable and neglected. We are called to serve the “least of these” (Matthew 25).

A recent report by the Brookings Institute, entitled “Leave No Country Behind – Ending Poverty in the Toughest Places,” shows that by 2030 about 80% of those people living in extreme poverty will be in 31 countries where fragile states, corruption, poor economic conditions, and violent conflict prevail. The Catholic Church, including CRS, already works in those countries and witnesses to the suffering millions of innocent families endure because of preventable conflict, corruption, and poverty. Our efforts to help communities develop are thwarted by these societal conditions.

The newly released USIP report “Preventing Extremism in Fragile States-A New Approach” recommends that, “Preventing the underlying causes of extremism is possible but requires us to adopt a new way of thinking about, structuring, and executing U.S. foreign policy...The objective of a preventive approach should be to strengthen societies that are vulnerable to extremism so they can become self-reliant, better able to resist this scourge, and protect their hard-earned economic and security gains.” Recently, the United States has focused on conflict stabilization and countering violent extremism. These sometimes-necessary approaches respond to underlying problems but do not prevent them. Much more U.S. attention to genuine conflict prevention, through peacebuilding and good governance, is required to address the root causes.

The Global Fragility Act of 2019 will help our government, in particular State Department and USAID, reach these goals by mandating an interagency initiative to coordinate conflict prevention activities, the selection of pilot countries to test and perfect these activities, the Stabilization and Prevention Fund and the Complex Crises Fund to finance such programs, and the tools to monitor and evaluate the results. The aim is to reduce the number of violent conflicts, deaths, and forcibly displaced persons. Over time, these efforts will reduce the need to send our young American men and women into harm’s way to curb violence and terrorism. We urge you ensure that prevention initiatives prioritize local leadership and ownership, especially from civil society and faith-based groups, in all aspects of program design, implementation and evaluation.

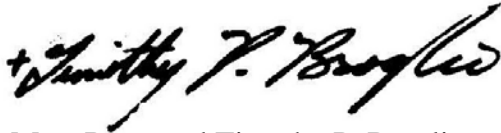
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To terminate our endless wars and prevent conflict and desperation in the poor and fragile countries of the world, the United States must first reorient its international affairs strategy towards a more robust diplomatic and development-centered engagement. Towards this end, we will work with you to support passage of this constructive, bi-partisan legislation.

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Timothy P. Broglio in black ink.

Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace

Handwritten signature of Sean Callahan in black ink.

Mr. Sean Callahan
President
Catholic Relief Services

Cc: Members of the House of Representatives