

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 25, 2020

His Excellency Alejandro Giammattei
President
Republic of Guatemala

Dear President Giammattei:

Congratulations on your inauguration as President of Guatemala. We look forward to working closely with you in the coming years to strengthen our bilateral partnership and to support the Guatemalan people. To that end, we write to express our concern over a law recently passed by the Guatemalan Congress that could threaten freedom of assembly and negatively impact legitimate non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We urge you to reject this legislation. It is essential to ensure that no measures are taken to disrupt NGOs working to strengthen democratic institutions.

Democracies flourish when they allow for open spaces for civil society to operate without fear of retribution. Guatemala has a vibrant civil society which contributes to its democracy. We believe that Bill 5257 could undermine the efforts of legitimate civil society organizations by imposing burdensome regulations and overly broad discretion over NGOs and their operations. We are particularly concerned that the law bears resemblance to a Russian measure regulating NGOs which was approved by Vladimir Putin in 2012 and similar laws put in place in Venezuela and Nicaragua. Finally, we are committed to working with you to address the root causes of migration from the Northern Triangle. Improving democratic governance and increasing public trust in government will help reduce migration. We believe that passage of this law could potentially have the opposite effect.

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Michael Kozak recently tweeted that, "Bill 5257 puts onerous requirements on NGOs in Guatemala, which play a key role in functioning democracies and help to strengthen democratic institutions." We could not agree more. We respectfully urge you to ensure that any laws affecting civil society are designed in a transparent manner and in accordance with democratic standards.

His Excellency Alejandro Giammattei
February 25, 2020
Page Two

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

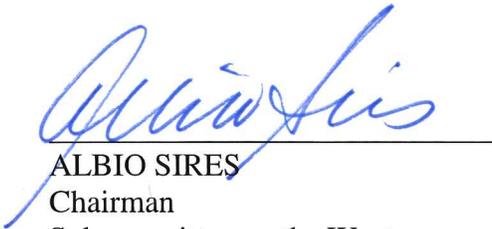
Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



ALBIO SIRE\$
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Western
Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade



FRANCIS ROONEY
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Western
Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade



NORMA J. TORRES
Co-Chair
Congressional Central America Caucus



ANN WAGNER
Co-Chair
Congressional Central America Caucus