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*One Hundred Seventeenth Congress*  
*U. S. House of Representatives*  
*Committee on Foreign Affairs*  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

June 4, 2021

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

Dear Madam Vice President:

We write in advance of your upcoming visit to Guatemala to encourage you to address the violence, discrimination, and extreme economic marginalization facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) persons in Guatemala. We appreciate that you have addressed these concerns in past meetings and encourage you to raise them again in both your private meetings and public comments to make clear that this epidemic of hate violence will not be tolerated.

As members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Congressional LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus, we are acutely aware of the stark reality facing LGBTQI persons in Guatemala. While our borders must remain open to those fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, we also know that the long-term solution to this challenge must be rooted in legal reforms that recognize and offer meaningful protections to LGBTQI citizens of Guatemala as well as equal access to economic and educational opportunities. We consider this to be an urgent human rights imperative and an essential step in reducing dangerous migration flows.

In a recent report entitled “Every Day I Live in Fear,” Human Rights Watch has documented the daily violence and entrenched discrimination that LGBTI individuals face in Guatemala and the failure of local authorities to offer any meaningful protection. We urge you to raise the following points:

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- There must be legal accountability for public officials who are responsible for or complicit in violence or discrimination against ethnic minorities, LGBTQI persons, women and girls;
- Legal protections must safeguard LGBTQI individuals in employment, education, housing, health care, and access to goods and services;
- Transgender individuals must be allowed to access identity documents that reflect their gender identity without unnecessary burdens as both a human right and as a violence mitigation strategy;
- Hate crimes must be tracked, analyzed, investigated and prosecuted; and
- National leaders must pledge publicly to protect LGBTQI citizens, recognizing their fundamental dignity and inherent rights.

In addition to your meetings with government officials, we also encourage you to meet with local civil society leaders, including LGBTQI human rights defenders who often face multiple forms of discrimination at the intersection of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity work under hostile conditions to document and respond to these abuses. Even a short meeting would go a long way in conveying concern and lending both urgency and legitimacy to this work. We would be pleased to help recommend leaders in the community who would be willing to meet with you to discuss these challenges. We understand that your work in Guatemala is an essential piece of your work in the broader Northern Triangle region and we would be interested in staying in communication with you and your team as you tackle similar issues in the neighboring countries of El Salvador and Honduras, which unfortunately are also hostile environments for LGBTQI people.

We appreciate your dedication to this important concern and look forward to hearing what more we can do through the Foreign Affairs Committee and the LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus to support your efforts.

Sincerely,



GREGORY W. MEEKS  
Chair  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



DAVID N. CICILLINE  
Chair  
Congressional LGBTQ+ Equality  
Caucus



TED W. LIEU  
Member of Congress



ANDY LEVIN  
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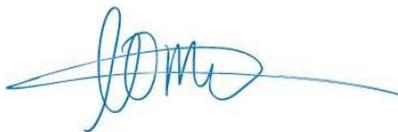
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