

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 28, 2020

The Honorable Carlos Trujillo
U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ambassador Trujillo:

We write to express our deep concern regarding comments made by a representative of your office on behalf of the Trump Administration during an Organization of American States (OAS) Permanent Council discussion on the LGBTI Core Group Statement commemorating the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT). We seek a full, written explanation from the Department of State on what these comments mean, why they were made and why the U.S. position at the May 13, 2020 OAS Permanent Council meeting departed from past practice. Please provide us with this explanation by no later than June 9, 2020.

While the U.S. expressed support for the Core Group Statement on IDAHOT, Deputy Permanent U.S. Representative to the OAS Alexis Ludwig stated that “the United States disagrees with the Inter-American Commission’s understanding of the concept of ‘discrimination’ and with its understanding of how the concept of ‘equal protection of the laws’ applies in this context.”

The United States must stand with LGBTI communities throughout the Americas as they continue to push back on harassment and violence. Fighting discrimination and guaranteeing equal protection are fundamental, and it is difficult to understand why the Trump Administration would object to these concepts. As LGBTI communities commemorate IDAHOT and fight for justice, they should have the complete backing of the U.S. government. The United States should join with the other OAS LGBTI core group countries – Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Uruguay – in fully commemorating IDAHOT rather than using this year’s statement as an opportunity to object to longstanding definitions of “discrimination” and “equal protection of the laws.”

We look forward to receiving a prompt explanation from you regarding the Trump Administration’s position on LGBTI rights in the Americas and the comments made at the OAS Permanent Council on May 13th.

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Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



ROBERT MENENDEZ
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations