

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Expresses concerns about Uganda's "Anti-Homosexuality Act" and its devastating impact on the Ugandan people and Public Health Programs

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Cory Booker (D-NJ), along with 27 Senate colleagues, expressed their concerns to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Samantha Power about Uganda's "Anti-Homosexuality Act," which was recently signed into law. In addition to expressing concern over the disturbing nature of this new law, the letter requests information on the impacts this law could have on U.S. foreign assistance programs, like PEPFAR.

"The '2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act' represents an existential threat to LGBTQI+ individuals in Uganda," **wrote the 29 Senators in a letter to the State Department and USAID.** "This law expands Uganda's criminalization of the LGBTQI+ community by increasing the sentence for same-sex acts to life imprisonment and, disturbingly, establishes a new charge of 'aggravated homosexuality' which, in certain circumstances, is punishable by the death penalty. The law also seeks to criminalize the 'promotion of homosexuality,' which is broadly defined to include activities such as leasing any house or building to anyone who is LGBTQI+ or who may be discussing LGBTQI+ rights, distributing information on homosexuality, or providing financial support to activities that 'encourage homosexuality or the observance or normalization of' LGBTQI+ issues. This provision effectively silences an entire community of LGBTQI+ people and allies as the penalties for this provision include facing up to 20 years in prison."

The Senators also expressed concerns about the bill's potential impact on U.S. global health programs.

“We are also deeply concerned that the provisions of the law regarding the promotion of homosexuality will undermine the gains that have been made toward HIV treatment and prevention in the country. Uganda has one of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the world and has been a major recipient of assistance through PEPFAR. According to a 2023 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report, since PEPFAR scaled-up their programming in Uganda in the early 2000s, the program has helped prevent almost 600,000 HIV-related deaths, as well as nearly 500,000 new HIV infections. Although HIV/AIDS affects many communities in Uganda, gay, bisexual, other men who have sex with men, and transgender women experience higher rates of HIV infection, with access to health care services curtailed by already existing criminalization statutes in the country. PEPFAR programs cannot be successful in meeting their goals without working closely with the Ugandan LGBTQI+ community and other key population partners to ensure access to safe, comprehensive, and welcoming services—as PEPFAR has done for two decades,” **continued the Senators.**

Senators Baldwin and Booker requested that the State Department and USAID answer several questions regarding PEPFAR, tools at the Administration's disposal to protect the LGBTQI+ community and human rights defenders, and accountability for human rights abusers. The Senators also cautioned of potential ripple effects, including the introduction of similar legislation across the region and around the world.

“The United States has a responsibility to advocate for the human rights of vulnerable communities around the world—including LGBTQI+ individuals. No one deserves to live in fear of persecution or death because of who they are or who they love. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter,” **concluded the Senators.**

The letter is cosigned by U.S. Senators Ed Markey (D-MA), John Fetterman (D-PA), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Peter Welch (D-VT), Chris Coons (D-DE), Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Tom Carper (D-DE), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI),

Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Mark Kelly (D-AZ), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH).

“Uganda’s draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act is a horrific display of bigotry that will have wide-reaching effects across the entire region,” **said David Stacy, the Vice President of Government Affairs at the Human Rights Campaign.** “We are grateful to Senators Booker and Baldwin and their colleagues for their leadership condemning this legislation as we are unfortunately already seeing its harms on LGBTQ+ Ugandans, with hateful attacks on the LGBTQ+ community increasing in response to the law. We applaud the Biden Administration’s quick response opposing the bill thus far, and join in calling on the Administration to take immediate further action to hold the Government of Uganda accountable for this unjust law.”

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#).