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June 21, 2007

The Honorable Tom Lantos
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lantos and Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen:

On behalf of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), I would like to thank you for your leadership on international food assistance issues. Accordingly, I urge you to support H.R. 1616 bipartisan legislation to expand the George McGovern-Robert Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. The McGovern-Dole Program fights hunger and promotes education by providing food to chronically hungry children in schools in the world's poorest countries. In the long run the program helps build social stability

CRS began implementing school feeding programs around the world in the early 1950s with USAID/Food for Peace resources. Since 2002, CRS has assisted almost eight million children and other participants worldwide. Through these programs (which include the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program) food is distributed through local counterparts at institutional feeding centers such as formal primary schools, non-formal bridge schools, and early childhood/pre-school centers. CRS internal studies found that food assisted education programs provide many benefits. These benefits include increased enrollment, attendance, retention (especially for girls), attentiveness, and community participation, as well as improved communication and links between local government authorities and communities. These benefits accrue when food is coupled with support to essential quality education components.

Currently 800 million people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger. Of these, 110 million are children. Although the McGovern/Dole Program has been effective, it currently only reaches about 3 million of these children. Additional funding for the McGovern-Dole program would mean that more children will be better fed, better educated, and better neighbors in our global world. On behalf of CRS, and the members of the U.S. Catholic community that we represent, I urge your support of this life saving and life changing legislation.

Sincerely,

Ken Hackett
President

cc: Members, House Foreign Affairs Committee