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NHAEON
NATIONAL HAITIAN AMERICAN ELECTED OFFICIALS NETWORK

December 14, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

We, the National Haitian American Elected Officials Network (NHAEON), along with allied faith-based and civil society groups, write to you due to the deteriorating humanitarian crisis that is ongoing in Haiti and to urge you to facilitate the passage of the Haiti Criminal Collusion Transparency Act of 2023 (S.396) before the 2023 calendar year concludes. The bill has been pending in the Senate since May 4, 2023.

As outlined in this Act, a significant number of Haitian political and economic elites have been involved in the support of criminal activities of gangs that create ongoing political and security instability in Haiti. Those groups have provided weapons and other means of support to gang leaders to strengthen their power in many neighborhoods across the country, which has forced many Haitians to negotiate with these gang members for their safety and survival within their own communities. This, unfortunately, reinforces gang control. They also recruit many young Haitians and provide them with money to grow their political power in populated neighborhoods across Haiti. An article published by Reuters on August 18, 2023, states the following regarding the humanitarian catastrophe: "*The U.N. estimates that since the start of 2023, at least 2,439 people have been killed and over 200,000 people internally displaced amid severe food shortages, kidnappings, and widespread sexual violence*."

Tens of thousands of Haitians have been forced to leave Haiti to come to the United States, and the rest of the Americas, because of gang violence within their communities. More will irregularly come to the U.S. by sea and the U.S. southern border with Mexico. The destabilization of Haiti, catalyzed by criminal economic and political elites, has spillover directly affecting the United States and its interests. A CBS News article dated August 24, 2023 states that U.S. Department of Homeland Security's internal data showed that at least 67,926 Haitians have left Haiti to come to the United States since the start of the humanitarian parole program in January 2023.

A November 28, 2023 report from the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (UNHCR) documents that from January 2023 to October 2023, gangs in Haiti have established themselves and are committing murder, spreading terror, and additional gross violations of human rights in Haiti's Artibonite region. The gangs are blocking irrigation canals, stealing livestock, and crops; 12,000 acres (5,000 hectares) of crops have been lost, for a country on the verge of famine due to farmers running away from the terrorism of gangs. One-half of Haiti's Artibonite population of 1.7 million people are at risk of starvation because of these latest series of events. This UNHCR report notes that the gangs in Haiti's Artibonite (Central region) are backed by "*extremely influential political and economic players. The latter in turn rely on these gangs to create instability, satisfy their political ambitions, control sectors of the economy, and facilitate illicit trafficking by controlling main roads*."

We believe that the passage and signing into law of the Haiti Criminal Collusion Transparency Act of 2023 will significantly contribute to the reduction of criminal elements of Haiti's political and economic elites' ability to continue funding and support the widespread destabilizing effects of gang activities in Haiti. This Act mandates the publication of the names of those political and economic elites who use their money and influence to terrorize the Haitian people for the sole purpose of maximizing their power while destabilizing their own country. This Act is crucial to help stabilize Haiti and will authorize the seizure of U.S. assets of those who contribute to and fund gang activities in Haiti.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, including in the interest of the United States, we firmly urge the passage of the Haiti Criminal Collusion Transparency Act of 2023 (S. 396) by the U.S. Senate before the 2023 calendar year concludes. This act will help strengthen the judicial system in Haiti and create conditions to bring to justice those political and economic elites who have destabilized the country during the past three decades. Time is of the essence, and the Senate must act now to save many lives from gang violence, thereby promoting greater stability for the entire Caribbean region, a great interest of the United States of America.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of passing this Act.

Sincerely,

Agape Christian Fellowship
Bethesda World Ministries Inc.
Beyond Borders
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Denver Justice and Peace Committee
Essex County Community Organization
Faith in Action International
Faith in New Jersey
Faith in New York
Franciscan Action Network
Haiti Pathway Forward
Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti
Komite Ayiti, Inc
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mercy Focus On Haiti

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance for the Advancement of Haitian Professionals (NAAHP)
National Haitian American Elected Officials Network (NHAEON)
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
Quixote Center
Reve Et Action
Shekinah FM
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
St Patrick St Anthony Sister Parish Committee, Hartford, CT
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
United Front of the Haitian Diaspora