



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

May 18, 2022

The Honorable Chris Coons
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Lee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators/Representatives,

Today we, bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), write you as lead congressional appropriators, to call your attention to the dire cash flow situation faced by the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem. AVH is operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and supported by the ELCA and several other member churches of the LWF. It is a major medical facility in Jerusalem to care for Palestinian refugees. Most of the patients served by the hospital need specialized, lifesaving care.

AVH is the first and only hospital to provide radiation therapy for cancer patients in the Palestinian territories and the only medical facility in the West Bank offering pediatric kidney dialysis. On a daily basis, these and other specialty services touch countless lives, both young and old, from communities across the Palestinian territories.

AVH faces ongoing cash flow problems as a result of the inability of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to pay on a regular basis the fees for cancer patients it refers to the hospital.

AVH has received vital support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in recent years (approximately \$57.42 million in cancer-related machines, lab equipment and training) that has raised the level of cancer treatment available through AVH for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

AVH finished 2021 with outstanding bank loans of \$940,000 and suppliers owed \$15.26 million, against \$160,000 in cash on hand and \$72.4 million owed the hospital by the PA. In October 2021, AVH received (for the first time since 2017) U.S. funding via the Palestinian Authority in the amount of \$8.3 million, equivalent to 12% of the PA's total debt.

However, the costs for patients referred to AVH continue to mount at the rate of \$4.5 million per month, and another USAID payment is needed in 2022. The U.S. funding, coupled with funding from the European Union, for AVH or other East Jerusalem hospitals, is crucial to avoid any interruption of treatment for West Bank or Gaza cancer patients or other patients — especially children, who are particularly at risk.

Please support the transfer of \$120 million to USAID to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people in 2022. These allocations are needed to cover the PA's debt to AVH and the other East Jerusalem hospitals.

I encourage you to visit Augusta Victoria Hospital to see first-hand the important work being done and the hospital's partnership with the U.S. government through USAID. To schedule a visit to the hospital, contact LWF Representative Sieglinde Weinbrenner at sieglinde.weinbrenner@lutheranworld.org, +972-2-628-2289 (office) or +972-53-525-5843 (cell).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Elizabeth A Eaton
Presiding Bishop

The Rev. Tracie L Bartholomew
Bishop, New Jersey Synod
Chair, Conference of Bishops

The Rev. Ginny Aebischer
Bishop, South Carolina Synod

The Rev. Amy L Current
Bishop, Southeastern Iowa Synod

The Rev. Laura L Barbins
Bishop, Northeastern Ohio Synod

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Bishop, Metropolitan Chicago Synod

The Rev. Daniel G Beaudoin
Bishop, Northwestern Ohio Synod

The Rev. Suzanne B Darcy Dillahunt
Bishop, Southern Ohio Synod

The Rev. Sue Briner
Bishop, Southwestern Texas Synod

The Rev. Patricia A Davenport
Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

The Rev. Shelley M Bryan Wee
Bishop, Northwest Washington Synod

The Rev. Jim Dunlop
Bishop, Lower Susquehanna Synod

The Rev. Susan Canda
Bishop, Central States Synod

The Rev. Anne C Edison-Albright
Bishop, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin

The Rev. Jeff Clements
Bishop, Northern Illinois Synod

The Rev. Paul D Erickson
Bishop, Greater Milwaukee Synod

The Rev. Barb Collins
Bishop, Upper Susquehanna Synod

The Rev. Katherine A Finegan
Bishop, Northern Great Lakes Synod

The Rev. Bill Gafkjen
Bishop, Indiana-Kentucky Synod

The Rev. Jim Gonia
Bishop, Rocky Mountain Synod

The Rev. Erik K Gronberg
Bishop, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana
Synod

The Rev. Constanze Hagmaier
Bishop, South Dakota Synod

The Rev. Regina M Hassanally
Bishop, Southeastern Minnesota Synod

The Rev. James E Hazelwood
Bishop, New England Synod

The Rev. Bob Humphrey
Bishop, Virginia Synod

The Rev. Deborah K Hutterer
Bishop, Grand Canyon Synod

The Rev. Richard E Jaech
Bishop, Southwestern Washington Synod

The Rev. Kevin T Jones
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

The Rev. Donald P Kreiss
Bishop, Southeast Michigan Synod

The Rev. Laurie A Larson Caesar
Bishop, Oregon Synod

The Rev. Brian D Maas
Bishop, Nebraska Synod

The Rev. Joy F Mortensen-Wiebe
Bishop, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

The Rev. Amy J Odgren
Bishop, Northeastern Minnesota Synod

The Rev. Dee Pederson
Bishop, Southwestern Minnesota Synod

The Rev. Michael W Rinehart
Bishop, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

The Rev. Megan M Rohrer
Bishop, Sierra Pacific Synod

The Rev. S. John Roth
Bishop, Central/Southern Illinois Synod

The Rev. Craig A Schweitzer
Bishop, Western North Dakota Synod

The Rev. Laurie Skow-Anderson
Bishop, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

The Rev. Tim Smith
Bishop, North Carolina Synod

The Rev. Kevin L Strickland
Bishop, Southeastern Synod

The Rev. Ann M Svennungsen
Bishop, Minneapolis Area Synod

The Rev. Andy Taylor
Bishop, Pacifica Synod

The Rev. Bill Tesch
Bishop, Northwestern Minnesota Synod

The Rev. Shelley R Wickstrom
Bishop, Alaska Synod

Cc: Dr. Jill Biden, Administrator Samantha Power, USAID; Ms. Megan Doherty, USAID