

*December 12, 2019*

**Congresswoman Grace Meng (NY-6)  
Testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Member's Day Hearing**

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, Subcommittee Chairwoman Karen Bass, Ranking Member Chris Smith, and distinguished members of this Committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss several of my priorities that are under the jurisdiction of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. As a former Member of this Committee, it is great to be back in this room with so many friends.

First, I want to thank this Committee for marking up two of my bills this year: The Refugee Sanitation Facility Safety Act (H.R. 615), which passed the House by unanimous consent in May, and the Divided Families Reunification Act (H.R. 1771), for which I am optimistic that it will soon be considered on the floor of the House.

One of my top priorities as a Member of Congress is protecting those who are vulnerable around the world – whether women and girls seeking an education or employment, those who lack access to basic services, or victims of natural disasters. As a Member of the State and Foreign Operations House Appropriations Committee, I am proud to do what I can to help direct our federal funding priorities to address these concerns.

Today, I want to bring to the attention of the Committee two pieces of legislation:

**H.R. 4092, the Safe from the Start Act**, which aims to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) from the onset of emergencies. Too often, international response efforts fail to recognize GBV as a problem until a major disaster response effort is underway. This legislation is intended to help the humanitarian community take preventative measures and ensure that quality services are available for survivors from the onset of an emergency or crisis. The Safe from the Start Act will increase dedicated GBV interventions, integrate GBV risk mitigation across all humanitarian sectors, and increase accountability. I am thankful to the bipartisan co-leads of this legislation: Representatives Chris Stewart, Lois Frankel, Mario Diaz-Balart, and Chrissy Houlahan, as well as the cosponsors who sit on this committee: Representatives Dean Phillips, Ted Lieu, Guy Reschenthaler, Gregory Meeks, David Cicilline, Dina Titus, Ted Deutch, and Adam Kinzinger.

In the new year, I will also be introducing the **Youth, Peace, and Security Act**. There are more than 1.8 billion youth in the world, the largest number to have ever existed. Youth populations have long been at the forefront of building peace in their communities by creating youth-led movements, organizations, and networks to mitigate negative effects of conflict and to prevent recurring cycles of violence. Moreover, in countries in conflict, it will be the young people who bear the burden of sustaining the peace over generations, and leading their society from reconciliation to prosperity. This bill will authorize a Youth Coordinator, require a Youth strategy, expand technical assistance to youth leaders, and create an emergency assistance fund. I look forward to introducing this legislation and hope to have this Committee's support.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify, and I look forward to continuing working with this Committee in the second session of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.