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<i>Name of the Committee and Subcommittee</i>	House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on International Development, International Organizations and Global Corporate Social Impact and the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, Migration, and International Economic Policy
<i>Date and Title of the hearing at which you are testifying</i>	Wednesday, June 22, 2022, 10:00 a.m., EDT Addressing Root Causes of Migration from Central America through Private Investment: Progress in VP Harris' Call to Action

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the role of the private sector in addressing the root causes of migration in Central America.

I'm Celina de Sola, a Salvadoran social entrepreneur, and co-founder and president of Glasswing International, an independent Central American non-profit organization focused on addressing some of the region's most pressing challenges faced by youth and communities, by building collaborative efforts across businesses, government and community members. I co-founded Glasswing International in 2007 to address the root causes and consequences of violence and poverty through health, education, and community-led initiatives in my home country of El Salvador. Glasswing specializes in positive youth development, youth empowerment, social and emotional learning, volunteering, as well as youth economic opportunities. Mental Health has also become a top priority that is foundational to other outcomes, and something we have worked on for over a decade, recently obtaining a \$43 million award to scale in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Glasswing is an independent, non-partisan organization that specializes in convening and catalyzing development initiatives across the private sector, public sector, and civil society. In 15 years of working in Latin American communities, Glasswing has directly impacted the lives of over 1.5 million people, expanded to a team of over 550 people working in 12 countries, and mobilized over \$125 million for programming in the region, working through partnerships with businesses, public service institutions, and local communities.

We work with young Central Americans that are facing extreme adversity - exposure to violence and trauma, stigma, social exclusion, and a lack of access to opportunities. Most of the young men and women we work with want to be able to succeed and thrive in their communities and countries. On top of the existing vulnerabilities faced - as well as frequent natural disasters, such as hurricanes - the COVID-19 pandemic has layered on even more challenges, exacerbating pre-existing conditions such as overwhelmed public service institutions, limited access to quality education, and economic opportunities - posing even greater risks.

Forging cross-sector partnerships has been central to Glasswing's philosophy since we began. For 15 years, we have leveraged the human and financial resources of businesses, governments, and civil societies to achieve meaningful and sustained impact. We have also worked with companies to leverage their workforce as volunteers, designing and implementing tailor-made volunteer programs based on specific company interests and needs. Our partnerships have included both multinational and Central American corporations, USAID's support during our early years was catalytic to leverage additional corporate funding through Global Development Alliance's (GDA's). For example:

- **Hanesbrands:** *We have partnered with Hanes for over 10 years to implement our Community Schools youth program, which provides safe spaces and life skills development opportunities for students and their families living in the communities surrounding Hanes's operations. Hanes has not only sustained their financial contribution over time, but has also given their employees the opportunity to volunteer, which has been uniquely impactful, seeing as many are from these same communities. The impact has not only included improved academic outcomes among participants, but also enhanced pride, rooting, and resilience.*
- **Citi:** *Citi Foundation and Glasswing International have partnered since 2011, developing core life skills, financial, and entrepreneurial capabilities in young people, not only to provide them with learning opportunities that help them thrive, but also to help facilitate their school-to-work transition, and support them as they develop micro-businesses through which they learn how to generate income. In the last 5 years alone, almost 10,000 young people and 245 Citi volunteers have participated in this program, and over 138 new business initiatives have been created by participants, contributing to their household income.*
- **Dutch Bros. Coffee:** *This company from Oregon is supporting our work with rural coffee-producing communities in rural El Salvador, through an integrated program that improves access to quality health care; diversifies and improves educational quality through English learning programs; as well as partnering with parents, teachers and young people on early childhood development initiatives, violence prevention, and mental health programming.*
- **The Howard G. Buffett Foundation:** *Private sector philanthropy is another powerful vehicle to address root causes of irregular migration. Last year, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation and Glasswing International launched a Central American Youth Corps, with an initial investment of \$13.2 million, provided exclusively by the Buffett Foundation. This initiative harnesses the power of young people in the region to remain rooted to, and work to improve their home communities, supporting long-term development and addressing local priorities, such as education and public health. We work with eight other Central American community-based organizations in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as YouthBuild International as a technical assistance partner. This pilot is a great example of the potential of the private sector to be agile, innovative, and immediately responsive in creating the conditions for youth people to see opportunity and a desirable future in their home communities. This year, USAID is also supporting this service corps initiative, with funding that will enable Glasswing to lay the groundwork for a sustainable national youth service corps model in the region, as well as other technical assistance partners, for example: Peace Corps, the InterAmerican Foundation, and CityYear.*

I am also proud to serve on the advisory council for Inter-American Foundation, which is doing innovative work to address the root causes of migration. The IAF actively collaborates with the private sector - corporate and philanthropic - in joint funding initiatives, while also leveraging decades of experience helping to scale the capabilities of small businesses and social enterprises to access new markets, export goods and services, and do business with the United States.

*Undoubtedly, partnerships between the private sector and civil society organizations are key to addressing many of the toughest challenges facing Central America. **Vice President Harris and the Administration's Call to Action** is a crucial step in convening and catalyzing the private sector to create more hope and opportunities for Central American youth, as part of a broader strategy to address the root causes of irregular migration. The exciting part now is to turn these commitments into practical and actionable pathways in a way that engenders sustained impact for those who need it most. An ideal vehicle to do this is through Vice President Kamala Harris' launch of the Central American Service Corps (CASC) initiative, which builds on the initiative that Glasswing launched with the Howard G. Buffett Foundation last year. The Partnership for Central America's (PCA) is also critical in this collaborative effort, supporting Vice President Harris's launch of the Central American Service Corps (CASC), by mobilizing dozens of businesses from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and the U.S. who have already pledged to support this initiative. The key is to ensure that we work closely with local organizations and communities so we can channel these investments to provide opportunities for young women and men that face the most adversity and are most at risk of having to migrate irregularly.*

In order to ensure that we are achieving the outcomes and results we seek, at Glasswing we are committed to rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Our programs are regularly evaluated - both internally and externally - and we also maintain ongoing feedback loops with the children, youth, and families we work with, to ensure that we are always addressing their priorities. In fact, we have hired 60 former participants of our programs into our team of current staff members in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

One of the most important aspects we have found in assessing the progress of any effort, is understanding that progress does take time. Vice President Harris's Call To Action has undoubtedly generated momentum and much-needed commitments. The CASC initiative can enable companies to have a profound impact on the young people in Central America - both through their social investments and through their business practices. I believe that if these commitments are directly responsive to the needs and priorities of young people in locations where they are facing adversity - and if they are sustained over time - they will engender hope and provide opportunities.

For example - adjusting, improving, or creating the national social and economic architecture and opportunities from which rural and urban young people have been excluded is a challenge that will require time to address. We also know that companies know best what skills potential employees require, so we can help build those bridges between young people, the education and

employability programs they participate in, and employers. To do this, Glasswing forms alliances and maintains regular meetings with private sector partners to ensure that young women and men are developing the knowledge and skills that will best prepare them to transition into the workforce. At the end of the day, more jobs don't mean more opportunities for everyone, because equity in opportunity is significantly lacking. Glasswing and other local organizations can play a critical role in helping to bridge gaps regarding expectations and needs between businesses and young people, especially by ensuring that youth have a voice in this analysis and planning.

*The following are my **recommendations** as to how USG can capitalize on the current momentum from Vice President Harris's Call to Action to better engage with private sector to address the root causes of migration:*

- *CASC presents an ideal opportunity to engage the private sector in addressing the root causes, by providing educational, social, and economic inclusion opportunities for young people that are tiered and differentiated for different educational levels;*
- *Businesses should actively consider inclusive hiring practices, that include people with different levels of education and skills, and avoid discrimination based on where they live (we have been discussing employment opportunities with PCA member, Millicom).*
- *Working with the ecosystem of national government entities, local civil society organizations, businesses, and youth voices. The real challenge is adjusting, improving or creating the national architecture for rural and urban young people that have been excluded or marginalized from opportunities.*
- *Motivate and incentivize companies to engage with local Central American civil society organizations that are working in and with communities, so they can help the private sector directly address the priorities of young people and communities. As USAID Administrator Samantha Power said in her speech at the Society for International Development conference, "shifting to a model of locally-led development means ceding power over decision-making to those who know their problems best."*

Undoubtedly, the most impactful cross-sector collaborations are those that leverage both the resources and expertise of both private sector and civil society, and complement the investments made by US government agencies, such as USAID.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing, and I look forward to any questions you may have.