

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 7, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to express our concern over the situation in Colombia, a country that stands as the United States' most important partner in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Colombian people are facing an unprecedented combination of challenges and it is important that the United States demonstrate its unwavering support for them at this critical juncture. We urge you to expand engagement with our democratic partner as the Colombian government moves forward in protecting the rule of law and human rights for all Colombians, while striving to alleviate the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the legacy of the longest civil war in the Americas.

For more than two decades, Colombia has enjoyed strong bipartisan support from the United States and has provided a vital source of stability in the region despite considerable challenges. In response to the influx into Colombia of nearly two million refugees and migrants fleeing the brutal Maduro regime in Venezuela, Colombians have provided unparalleled generosity and willingness to host them. Colombian authorities have cooperated with American agencies to combat transnational criminal organizations and illegal armed groups whose drug trade brings with it a terrible cost to both of our countries.

However, with the country facing a third wave of the COVID-19 virus, Colombia is now seeking to resolve nationwide demonstrations sparked by the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, which pushed 3.6 million Colombians into poverty last year. As thousands of Colombians have taken to the streets, the intermittent shutdown of key roads, damage to public infrastructure and ongoing violent clashes has limited vaccine distribution across the country and ultimately set back earnest efforts to address the Colombian people's needs. It is critical that all parties continue engaging in meaningful dialogue and negotiation, and establish mechanisms to ensure follow through.

The United States, under your leadership, can play a helpful role in accompanying and supporting Colombia. The U.S.-Colombia partnership and the security of the Colombian people must continue to transcend party affiliation and political philosophy. Our relationship is rooted in shared democratic values and a shared interest in promoting peace and stability for Colombia, its neighbors, and the whole region.

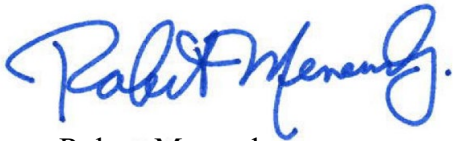
That is why, during this period of unrest, we have been concerned by incidents of violence against protesters. We welcome that the Colombian government has condemned cases of human

rights abuses and support its commitment to thoroughly investigate incidents of excessive use of force and abuses by Colombian security forces, as well as significant evidence of civilians using lethal weapons against peaceful protestors. We are supportive of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' engagement on these issues in order to promote the defense of human rights and investigate the recent incidents.

As you know, the road to lasting peace is long and uncertain—an agreement on its own cannot succeed without the commitment of all parties to its full implementation. Since 2016, many of us have traveled to Colombia to observe implementation of the peace process. It is clear that genuine support for a peace process by all sides is the best path forward to ensure that Colombia does not return to conflict and can more successfully confront illicit narcotics trafficking. To this end, we express our sustained commitment to supporting Colombia's efforts to build a lasting peace.

In 2020, you referred to Colombia as the “keystone” of U.S. policy towards Latin America. We agree and urge high-level attention to this unfolding and complicated situation. We respectfully request that you direct the State Department and USAID to prioritize assisting Colombia in resolving this crisis. The United States must stand by our partner's side in the interest of upholding human rights, democracy, and stability in the region.

Sincerely,



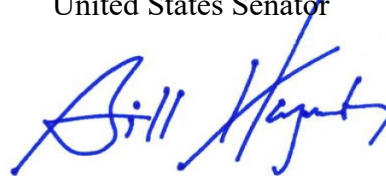
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Bill Hagerty  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Roy Blunt  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



John Hoeven  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Rob Portman  
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator