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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
Subcommittee on Africa, Global
Human Rights and International Operations
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere

February 27, 2006

Djole Dance and Drum Company
2449 Beacon Street
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

To the Youth of the Djole Dance and Drum Company:

It is my pleasure to write you today in support of the Djole Dance and Drum Company's outstanding efforts toward the international education of African and African American young people on the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

AIDS is the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time. Today over 40 million people are living with AIDS worldwide. It is literally killing millions of people and crippling economies all over the globe. Here at home the impact of HIV/AIDS on African Americans is extremely alarming. While the number of new diagnoses for virtually every segment of the population is declining, it is rapidly increasing for African Americans, particularly African American women.

In Alameda County, where my district is located, African Americans represent about 43 percent of all AIDS cases, yet they only represent 15 percent of the total population. Moreover, African American women in Alameda County represent about 66 percent of the cumulative AIDS cases among all women since the beginning of the pandemic. Nationally, these trends are even worse, so we must continue to be united in our efforts to put a stop to this global health crisis.

As you know, the AIDS pandemic is also having a devastating impact on the African continent, with millions of Africans having fallen victim to this terrible disease. Women increasingly bear the brunt of the AIDS epidemic and in Sub-Saharan Africa, and they now account for more than 50 percent of all HIV/AIDS cases, and many who have passed away have left young children behind who are often responsible for younger siblings and in many cases have been exposed to HIV/AIDS themselves. In Uganda for example, HIV prevalence is 5 times higher in girls aged 15-19 than boys in the same age range, and it is of vital importance that we all work collaboratively on the global level to increase education, awareness and the availability of treatment in Africa and around the world.

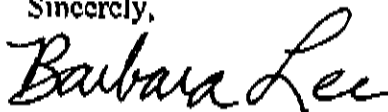
As Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Task Force on Global HIV/AIDS, I am dedicated to re-authorizing, strengthening, and fully funding the Ryan White CARE Act, and the Minority AIDS Initiative to address our national HIV/AIDS crisis. Globally, I am committed to creating and supporting legislation to address the pandemic in Africa, the Caribbean, India, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America by increasing funding for our bilateral programs, and the United States'

contribution to multilateral programs like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The work of the Djole Dance and Drum Company toward training and supporting a new generation of leaders and advocates, and to putting those new leaders in touch with other young people who can benefit from their knowledge and become leaders themselves, is of vital importance in continuing the fight against HIV/AIDS, and will undoubtedly save countless lives. I salute you for your efforts in the global struggle to end the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and for all that you do to improve lives in the 9th Congressional District, the United States, and around the world.

Thank you all for your tireless work, I wish you the best for a successful trip.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Lee".

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

BL:sa