Washington, DC, July 20, 2009 -Rev. David Beckmann, president, Bread for the World, is pleased to see a growing list of co-sponsors for the Initiating Foreign Assistance Reform Act of 2009 (H.R. 2139). Presently, the bill has 81 congressional co-sponsors, including 14 African American members.

Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA), Congressional Black Caucus chairwoman, is among the growing list of supporters of H.R. 2139. "Setting clear goals and strategy for alleviating poverty, improving global health, and encouraging sustainable development will be essential to strengthening America's foreign assistance capacity. H.R. 2139 would take a significant first step towards attaining these goals," said Lee.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Howard Berman (D-CA) and Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL) introduced the bill in April. It would require President Barack Obama to develop and implement a comprehensive national strategy for global development, to improve evaluation of development programs, and to increase the transparency of U.S. foreign assistance to developing countries.

U.S. global development programs are those that reduce hunger and poverty in poor countries through projects such as agriculture, nutrition, clean water, education, and health care. According to David Beckmann, U.S. these programs have helped millions of people in the developing world escape from hunger and poverty over the past several decades.

"We could do much more good by running the programs more effectively," Beckmann said. Currently global development policies and programs are scattered across 12 departments, 25 different agencies, and nearly 60 government offices. U.S. foreign assistance is still largely governed by a law passed in 1961 under President John F. Kennedy and is ill-equipped to keep pace with the needs of today's more populous, complex world.

"We are called to help our neighbors, whether they live in the next house, the next state, or the next continent," said Beckmann. "We cannot live with our eyes shut to the hundreds of millions of people who go to bed hungry every night. H.R. 2139 is a good initial step in making our nation's foreign assistance more effective, efficient, and transparent. Coordinating and improving our foreign assistance will have far-reaching effects on reducing hunger and poverty, and ensuring that we are able to effectively provide opportunities for our neighbors abroad."

Bread for the World (www.bread.org) is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad.