

June 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Majority Leader Schumer:

In 1948, the United States helped found the World Health Organization (WHO) and for over 70 years the agency has been a steadfast partner with the United States. Together, the two have achieved incredible public health results that would not have been possible alone. Polio will soon join smallpox as a disease of the past and we are accelerating progress in malaria, tuberculosis, nutrition, and family planning, because of the critical support provided by WHO in facilitating U.S. global health priorities. WHO provides vital technical capacity and cooperation, which many countries rely on to keep their populations safe, by helping to identify and combat infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and outbreaks like Ebola and Zika.

The WHO has been leading the unprecedented global response to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. has long recognized the unparalleled capabilities of the WHO to help save lives, improve global disease detection, and coordinate a global public health response. As a result, the U.S. has consistently been the largest donor to the WHO. The WHO's efforts strengthen America's health security and economic interests, because healthy countries are stable countries. Therefore, we, the undersigned organizations, urge Congress to reject Administration's efforts to terminate the relationship between the U.S and WHO and to instead fully fund its work.

The announcement that the United States would be terminating its relationship with the WHO came as a surprise to many in the global community. Recently, the President had stated his Administration would conduct a review of U.S. funding for the WHO and propose reforms prior to any decision about the status of our relationship or funding. The WHO has consistently expressed openness to reform and review, and the World Health Assembly unanimously agreed to take on an independent investigation into the response to COVID-19 at the earliest appropriate moment. As in the past, WHO has readily taken to heart the need to reform and evolve to meet the challenges the world faces now and in the future.

WHO is uniquely positioned to address the COVID-19 pandemic from technical, communications, and organizational capacities. With a presence in 150 countries around the world (often imbedded ministries of health), a legal mandate as defined in the International Health Regulations (IHRs), and a health emergencies program that operates at country, regional and headquarter level, only the WHO has the capacity and reach to gather public health data from any country in the world and use it to quickly develop and disseminate technical guidance to help countries prepare public health responses. WHO has published more than 100 pieces of technical guidance on COVID-19,

reaching communities, hospitals, frontline health workers, private sector partners, and other public health authorities operating at city, province and national levels in every country. WHO also created public awareness campaigns in dozens of languages for global distribution to billions of people.

WHO is the only organization capable of coordinating unprecedented global trials on COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines. The groundbreaking scope of the “Solidarity Trial,” which includes the participation of over 100 countries, enables researchers to collect information and generalize results related to potential therapeutics 80% faster than single-country studies.

Only WHO has the global convening power to marshal a partnership with Member States, major donors, and the private sector to create the ACT Accelerator. The initiative is pre-positioning manufacturing capacity and distribution channels that will ensure that all countries will have access to future therapies and vaccines faster and at a fair price. Ensuring all countries have access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments will save lives and is key to managing future waves of the virus.

The WHO is leading the global effort to supply health commodities and is coordinating the UN Global Supply Chain Task Force, working with the private sector, the World Food Programme, and the European Central Bank to establish an emergency supply chain for low-resource countries. At least 135 countries are relying on WHO to procure millions of pieces of personal protective equipment and other vital health commodities like tests and testing supplies. WHO has procured more than 200 million items of vital personal protective equipment, like masks, gloves, gowns, goggles, and face shields. By procuring centrally, enhancing transparency across the supply chain, and identifying where those supplies are needed most, WHO is ensuring vital health commodities will reach countries faster, and more efficiently, saving lives and money.

Preserving a strong U.S.-WHO partnership is critical to U.S. global health, foreign policy, and national security objectives. Our organizations call on you to reject the Administration’s attempts to terminate our relationship with WHO, and to please fully fund the WHO in Fiscal Year 2021 and future COVID-19 supplemental bills. We all benefit from the WHO’s preeminent global role strengthening health systems and ensuring a healthier world.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days
Action Against Hunger
Action for Global Health Network
Advocates for Youth
Alliance for Development and Population Services [ADEPS]
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Dental Research
American Jewish World Service
American Public Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene
American Thoracic Society

Appui Solidarite Pour Le Renforcement de l’Aide AU Development
Association des Femmes de l’Europe Meridionale (AFEM)
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Better World Campaign
Bread for the World
CARE USA
Catholics for Choice
Center for Biological Diversity
CHANGE (Center for Health and Gender Equity)
Children's HeartLink

Christian Connections for International Health
CORE Group
Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) North America
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
Every Mother Counts
Friends of The Global Fund Europe
Friends of UNFPA
General Federation of Women's Clubs
Girl Up
Global Health Council
Global Health Technologies Coalition
Global Network of Black People working in HIV
Global Water 2020
Greenpeace USA
Guttmacher Institute
HIV + Hepatitis Policy Institute
HIV Medicine Association
Human Rights Campaign
IAVI
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Association for Dental Research
International Pediatric Association
International Women's Health Coalition
Ipas
Jefferson College of Population Health
John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc..
Kenya AIDS NGOS Consortium (KANCO)
Kenya National Chapter of ECOSOCC
Knowledge Ecology International
Malaria No More

Management Sciences for Health
MPact Global Action for Gay Men's Health and Rights
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National League for Nursing
Nothing But Nets
PAI
PATH
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Institute
Right 2 Health / Pandemic Prevention Project
Save the Children
Seed Global Health
Shot@Life
TB Alliance
The Gerontological Society of America
Trust for America's Health
United Nations Association of the USA
United States People living with HIV Caucus
Universal Access Project
White Ribbon Alliance
Women's Refugee Commission
World Vision