

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