

November 29, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
Washington, DC

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Democratic Leader
Washington, DC

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
Washington, DC

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Democratic Leader
Washington, DC

Dear Leaders:

We are writing to sound the alarm.

World AIDS Day is on Friday, and for the first time in more than a decade, we will mark the day by not only celebrating the incredible progress we have made against the disease, but worrying that the U.S. commitment to ending AIDS is waning.

The bipartisan support for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) that runs deep in Congress is a major reason the efforts to end AIDS have been so incredibly successful. The resolve of Republicans and Democrats in Congress these past 15 years has created a hope unimaginable before the creation of PEPFAR and the Global Fund. PEPFAR has saved 11 million lives, currently supports 11.5 million people on treatment, and has ensured that more than 2 million babies have been born HIV-free to HIV-positive mothers. The Global Fund has saved 22 million lives and currently supports 11 million people on treatment. The DREAMS partnership has already reached over 1 million adolescent girls and young women with HIV program interventions.

We look to you again to harness that support to steer these programs towards continued success.

We have profound concern about the direction the Executive Branch appears to be taking in the global response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Administration's FY 2018 budget proposal and the State Department's new strategy for PEPFAR have caused us to doubt the White House's commitment to fighting the epidemic.

At a moment when we are finally getting ahead of the disease and its impact on communities, a reduction in funding like the Administration proposed – and implementation of PEPFAR's new strategy, which aligns with those budget cuts – would directly result in cuts to the number of people accessing HIV prevention, care, and treatment, and likely trigger a resurgence of the global epidemic.

We are deeply grateful that Congress intervened and dismissed the Administration's proposed funding cut for PEPFAR and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria in FY18. Even with full funding, however, the new PEPFAR strategy gives us pause about the trajectory of the program. By focusing on achieving control of the epidemic in 13 "priority" countries, while only maintaining life-saving treatment in other countries, this strategy runs the risk of forfeiting gains in some of the highest burden countries in the world. Additionally, the strategy does not take into account vulnerable populations like children, who do not contribute to epidemic control but are still being deeply impacted by the disease. It further fails to prioritize the key populations disproportionately impacted by the epidemic, including men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, sex workers, and transgender people.

It is critical that Congress continues to fund PEPFAR and the Global Fund to — at least — the level at which it operated in 2017. It is critical that Congress insists that the Administration fulfills the U.S. commitment to the Global Fund, and that funding for both programs does not come at the expense of other effective humanitarian and development assistance, which work together to serve the common goal to building a healthier, safer, more prosperous world. And PEPFAR must be allowed to pursue a strategy ambitious enough to help the world get 30 million people on treatment and to reduce the number of new infections per year to 500,000 by 2020.

We're grateful for your leadership, and your continued commitment to ending AIDS.

Signed,

Adventist Development and Relief Agency
International

Advocates for Youth

American Hindu World Service

amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research

Association of Nurses in AIDS Care

AVAC

Catholic Medical Mission Board

Center for Health and Gender Equity

The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS

Council for Global Equality

Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation

The Episcopal Church

Faiths for Safe Water

Friends of the Global Fight Against AIDS, TB &
Malaria

Global Citizen

Global Health Council

The Global Forum on MSM & HIV

Global Network of Black People Working in HIV

Guttmacher Institute

Health GAP

HIV Medicine Association

Housing Works

International AIDS Vaccine Initiative

Infectious Diseases Society of America

The International Partnership for Microbicides

International Women's Health Coalition

IntraHealth International

Islamic Relief USA

John Snow Inc.

NASTAD

National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

The ONE Campaign

PAI

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Save the Children

Treatment Action Group

The Regional Interagency Task Team on Children
and AIDS in Eastern and Southern Africa