

Secretary of State - Nominee Antony Blinken
Center for Presidential Transition
Partnership for Public Service
1100 New York Avenue NW
Suite 200 East
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Secretary Nominee Blinken:

As co-chairs of the Global AIDS Policy Partnership (GAPP), we write to offer our warm congratulations on your nomination to become the next Secretary of State. The GAPP is a coalition of over 70 advocacy, research and implementing organizations committed to ending AIDS for the next generation by expanding and improving global HIV/AIDS and TB programming. We applaud President-elect Joe Biden's World AIDS Day statement committing to expand support for bipartisan programs like the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM).

On December 1, World AIDS Day, Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) and Health Diplomacy announced new progress toward elimination of HIV as a global threat. PEPFAR now supports life-saving antiretroviral treatment for nearly 17.2 million men, women, and children, and funds a broad range of programs to avert infections among infants, children and young women. At the same time, there are important warning signals from the impact of COVID-19 on PEPFAR and GFATM, and our ability to reach all those living with or at risk of HIV, including infants, LGBTQ+ individuals and young women.

As such, leadership and a fully resourced program are essential to sustain all of the important impacts PEPFAR has made over the past 17 years. We would ask that if there is to be a change in leadership at OGAC, that you act swiftly to appoint a new Ambassador. The rapid selection of new leadership will invigorate the program and preserve progress currently endangered by COVID-19.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has vividly highlighted the critical importance of the Department of State's continuing role in global health diplomacy. This year should make clear the benefits to the United States from coordination with the global response to COVID-19 and other epidemics. A strong commitment to global health diplomacy as a pillar of your approach will reap tremendous benefits and help restore the recent damage to our global relations. Rejoining the World Health Organization and active engagement with that body will be critically important in healing global divisions and building stronger response to all health challenges our nation will face. As we know you appreciate, global health is a powerful tool for diplomacy.

As you consider the State Department response to the COVID-19 epidemic, we also urge you to consider the role that PEPFAR and GFATM specifically can play in our global response. With additional support and funding for this work, our response is best placed in part in agencies that have the infrastructure and experience in addressing global pandemics. As you consider your response to COVID-19 consider the benefits of funding and housing some of the effort in programs such as PEPFAR and GFATM that already enjoy broad bipartisan support.

Finally, we enclose the GAPP's transition memo presented to President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris this week.

Again, we congratulate you and we look forward to working with you on issues of global health and diplomacy moving forward. Should questions arise about the memo or this letter, or if you need additional information, or if you or your staff would like to speak with members of the GAPP to discuss these issues, please contact Katie Lapidés Coester (kcoester@pedaids.org), Helen Cornman (hcornman@planetaid.org) or Kevin Fisher (kevin@avac.org).

Sincerely

Helen Cornman
Katie Lapidés-Coester
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GAPP Co-Chairs