

December 5, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Charles Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

We, the Global AIDS Policy Partnership (GAPP), write to you again today with an urgent request for supplemental 2020 funding for bilateral and multilateral global health programs in the global response to COVID-19.

The GAPP is a coalition of more than 70 research, advocacy, implementing, faith based and professional membership organizations working collectively to end the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. As organizations with long histories working on HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and other global epidemics, we understand the unique challenges of major health crises in low- and middle-income countries, and the tremendous leadership that the U.S. has demonstrated while combatting these illnesses. The COVID-19 pandemic is now putting decades of achievement against HIV/AIDS at risk and is having a devastating impact on HIV/AIDS programming.

We recognize that the impact of COVID-19 on the United States is significant, and, as yet, unmitigated. However, as is true for HIV, or anything other infectious pathogen, no one is safe from COVID-19 until it is addressed everywhere.

In order to both protect U.S. investments in global health and to minimize ballooning future costs for diseases like HIV/AIDS if progress is not maintained in the face of COVID-19, the global health and development community is asking for \$20 billion in emergency funding for programs funded through the International Affairs Budget, including at least \$11 billion for bilateral global health programs and the multilateral response to support a holistic global response to COVID-19.

This past week we commemorated World AIDS Day—a time at which we would normally celebrate together global progress against HIV/AIDS and recommit to ending AIDS. This year we faced a much different reality. HIV testing rates under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is down nearly 40% over 2019, and in some countries 25% fewer HIV positive pregnant women are accessing services to prevent transmission to their babies. We've also seen a worrying 25% decline of HIV treatment initiation across many age groups. More than 70% of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria sites report moderate to severe disruptions due to COVID-19.

UNAIDS' recently released report shows that the global AIDS response was off track before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, but the rapid spread of the coronavirus has created additional setbacks. Modelling of COVID-19's long-term impact on the HIV response shows that there could be an estimated 123,000 to 293,000 additional new HIV infections and 69,000 to 148,000 additional AIDS-related deaths between 2020 and 2022. **The impact has been particularly acute for women and children as well as other vulnerable and marginalized populations. The situation is frankly dire.**

As you all know, PEPFAR, the Global Fund and other global health programs retain strong bipartisan support in both chambers, which has allowed them to reach millions of men, women and children across the past three Administrations. The colliding pandemics threaten to undue their legacy, and set the programs back years.

Additional funding for PEPFAR and the Global Fund will help countries adapt HIV, TB and malaria programming to protect our investments and meet the needs of those with and at risk for HIV while keeping clients and health care workers safe from COVID-19. Additionally, the requested funding will help build and sustain existing platforms like laboratory capacity and supply chains to assist countries in their COVID-19 response. These infrastructures and health systems—built by the global response to HIV and used already to address other diseases, such as cervical cancer, a leading killer of women living with HIV—can be similarly leveraged for COVID; and they will be critical to the rollout of vaccines. The Global Fund is the lead multilateral agency working to procure and distribute COVID-19 tests, therapeutics, and PPE. But the Global Fund is currently out of money to respond to COVID-19 and PEPFAR has received few additional funds.

We call on Congress to allocate essential additional resources for global health and development in the 2020 COVID-19 supplemental legislation. Without additional U.S. assistance during the worst global health crisis in a generation, we will not only continue to lose more men, women and children to COVID-19, we will also begin to lose those we could otherwise save from HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria.

We thank you in advance for your consideration and are happy to answer any questions or, provide additional information. Should you or your staff like to speak with members of the GAPP to discuss these issues, please contact GAPP Co-Chairs Katie Coester (kcoester@pedaids.org), Helen Cornman (hcornman@planetaid.org) or Kevin Fisher (kevin@avac.org).

Sincerely,

The Convening Group of the Global AIDS Policy Partnership