An Open Letter to the U.S. Congress

President Trump’s decision to halt funding for the World Health Organization in the midst of a pandemic is profoundly irresponsible and dangerous. This act will undermine the health and economic security of the United States and the international community and will weaken vital responses to this lethal international threat. Pandemics know no borders and the response to address them must include a combination of national and international efforts. The WHO is the only, global multilateral public health agency with a mandate to address public health emergencies.

Cutting funding to the WHO will eviscerate its capacity to deal with the current pandemic and the many other public health challenges the world faces. The countries that will be affected the most are low-income countries that already have weak healthcare systems and a very limited ability to provide the care critically ill patients need. To put it bluntly, cutting the WHO’s funding will kill people.

Rather than eliminating its financial support the United States should increase financing for the WHO to strengthen what it is already doing to coordinate actions across regions, mitigate risks, improve country preparedness and response, and accelerate research and development. As of April 7, the WHO has shipped critical, personal protective equipment to 133 countries, provided over 40 technical documents that combat misinformation and strengthen capacity, developed multilingual, online courses for COVID-19 and has launched vital international research trials to find effective treatments for COVID-19.

We are asking you, as a U.S. Congressperson, to assert your power to reinstate funding for the WHO and increase support for the organization’s activities to respond to the pandemic.

“A weak health system anywhere is a weak health system everywhere,” as Dr. Tom Frieden, the former director of the CDC, used to say. The only agency that has the mandate to work with countries to strengthen their health systems worldwide and address a pandemic is the WHO. This is the time to support the organization, not undermine it.

Sincerely,

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