

April 30, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Defense  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

As members of the Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC)—a group of more than 45 nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and aligned businesses advancing the creation of new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other tools for global health—we write in support of the Department of Defense’s (DOD’s) research and development (R&D) programs for new infectious disease technologies that are used to protect service members and improve global health.

**Our request:** For fiscal year 2025, we respectfully urge the Committee to sustain and protect funding for research to develop and promote access to new global health technologies at DOD within the Defense Health Program and the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program by:

- Including report language in support of R&D for malaria, leishmaniasis, and diarrheal diseases at the Walter Reed Army Institute for Research and the Navy Medical Research Center.
- Requesting that malaria and tuberculosis are again included in the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program.

**Why it matters:** DOD is a leading developer of products that protect service members working in low-resource settings around the world from infectious diseases, but this work is under threat from internal budget cuts.

- Malaria, leishmaniasis, and diarrheal research programs at the Walter Reed Army Institute for Research and the Navy Medical Research Center have been on the verge of elimination due to internal budget shifts without the consent of Congress.

**Quick history:** DOD is the world’s premier malaria research institution and has contributed to the development of nearly every antimalarial drug and the only malaria vaccine approved by a regulator.

- Every year, DOD ranks malaria as one of the leading infectious disease threats to service members. In fact, more person-days were lost due to malaria than to bullets during every US military campaign fought in malaria-endemic regions in the 20th century.

- The malaria parasite is evolving, and new drugs and prevention tools will be needed to protect service members from this disease in the future.

DOD was the world's biggest funder of clinical research for leishmaniasis products in 2017 and 2018 but nearly zeroed out its funding in 2021.

- Leishmaniasis is a parasitic disease spread by sandflies that can be highly fatal without diagnosis and treatment.
- There is still not a reliable point-of-care diagnostic for the most common form of leishmaniasis.

**What is needed:** Congress should support increased funding for DOD's malaria, leishmaniasis, and diarrheal research programs through report language.

### DOD research programs benefit global health.

In addition to protecting service members, DOD research programs also benefit global health.

**Why global health matters:** Global health is a bipartisan cornerstone of US foreign policy. Supporting the public health of partner countries has practical and moral justifications:

- It protects Americans from national health security threats, increases global political stability, lifts economies, and most importantly, saves millions of lives.
- These benefits require only small investments. In fiscal year 2023, global health was less than *seven cents* of every \$100 of discretionary public spending. And **investments in global health are highly effective**. In the last 20 years, investments in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, alone, have saved 25 million lives.

**Still, millions of people die every year because we do not have the technologies to save them.**

**The challenge:** In 2022, 1.3 million people were killed by tuberculosis, 1.3 million people were newly diagnosed with HIV, and 249 million people were infected by malaria. In 2019, at least 1.27 million people were killed by antibacterial resistance. More than 1 billion people worldwide are affected by neglected tropical diseases, a group of 20 diseases caused by a variety of pathogens. Women and children are often underserved in the health sector, especially in low-resource settings. In the future, the world is likely to face new pandemic threats.

**The United States, as a biomedical research powerhouse, can change history through relatively small public investments.**

**New medical products are needed** to overcome neglected diseases; to beat antimicrobial resistance; to replace outdated and toxic treatments; to defeat future pandemics; and to better reach low-resource, remote, and unstable settings. Examples of the technologies we need include:

- A vaccine and cure for HIV/AIDS.
- New treatments and prevention technologies for malaria.
- Shorter tuberculosis treatment regimens and a more effective vaccine.
- Better diagnostics and new treatments for neglected tropical diseases.
- A universal pandemic vaccine.
- New antibiotics and other tools to address antimicrobial resistance.
- New tools to address insecticide resistance.

- *And many others.*

**Why public investment is needed:** US government support for this research is critical because the private sector typically does not invest in technologies that have limited profit potential.

- Public investments often seed multisector funded product development partnerships, or PDPs: nonprofit organizations that convene government, science, private-sector, and community partners to develop new global health technologies.

**The bottom line:** Without new global health technologies, we are neither equipped to fully protect our service members nor able to achieve our global health and foreign policy goals.

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Infectious disease research protects the lives of our soldiers and millions of people around the world, fosters goodwill that enhances our national security, and promotes economic growth.

We stand ready to work with you on these important issues that are essential to achieving our nation's global health and security goals. Please do not hesitate to contact GHTC US Policy & Advocacy Officer Alex Long at [along@ghtcoalition.org](mailto:along@ghtcoalition.org) if you have questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,



American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene



AVAC



Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, U.S.



Coalition for Health Research and Development



Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation



Global Health Council

