

March 29, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Defense
1026 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Defense
2328 Rayburn House 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 25 organizations working to increase awareness of the vital role health technologies play in saving lives in the developing world—we write to highlight the critical role of US programs that support global health research and development (R&D) and thank you for your support of important global health R&D at the US Department of Defense (DoD).

We recognize that you face many challenging decisions, especially given current US military engagements, and understand that the primary mission of the DoD is to support our military men and women. We write to emphasize the importance of the DoD's infectious disease research not only in promoting the safety of our servicemen and women abroad, but also in supporting US global health efforts to address HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases in low-income countries. **For fiscal year 2019, we respectfully urge the Subcommittee to sustain and protect funding for research to develop new global health technologies at the DoD both within the Defense Health Program and the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program, and where possible target new funds from proposed increases in Defense spending to important infectious disease research that benefits both our service members and vulnerable populations overseas.**

The DoD plays a unique role in the advancement of new vaccines, drugs, and health technologies that prevent and treat infectious diseases that many Americans never see up close, but our servicemen and women stationed overseas experience alongside local communities. We saw this most recently with the Department's response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. DoD's quick work to advance the development of Ebola vaccines and treatments during troop deployment to West Africa underscores the importance of DoD research for countermeasures to address the many disease threats that may undermine operational effectiveness.

Not only are DoD's research efforts for infectious disease critical to protecting our troops overseas, but they are also important for promoting global health and global health security. Diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases devastate hundreds of millions of people around the world, pose public health threats in the United States, and inhibit the economic growth of our global

trading partners. In our increasingly interconnected world, infectious diseases are a plane ride—or mission deployment—away, and research at DoD yields tremendous dividends for saving lives around the world, promoting global growth and development, and ensuring global health security.

Further, malaria, which threatens the lives of nearly 3.2 billion people in tropical and poor regions of the world, is also a significant threat to the operational readiness of the US military: more person-days were lost among US military personnel due to malaria than to bullets during every military campaign fought in malaria-endemic regions during the 20th century. Thanks to on-going research at DoD, nearly all of the most effective and widely used antimalarials were developed in part by US military researchers.

The study of diseases, including malaria, dengue fever, leishmaniasis, and smallpox, has historically been an important component of the DoD's medical research programs worldwide. While focused on protecting and treating US armed forces, the global health efforts of DoD and its partners include substantial R&D, infrastructure and capacity building, as well as training programs that benefit countries with few resources for health care. **The DoD continues to conduct research aimed at developing solutions to global health challenges. For example:**

- The US Military HIV Research Program (MHRP) continues its efforts to develop a safe and effective HIV vaccine. Researchers began screening participants for a new follow-up study, supported by the MHRP, on the RV144 HIV vaccine candidate regimen. MHRP also announced that it was selected as a Clinical Trials Unit and will receive funding from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to continue work on HIV vaccine and therapeutics research. DoD programs in leishmaniasis and dengue fever research have led to breakthroughs in treatment for these diseases.
- The Defense Advance Research Program Agency pioneered technology that has led to electrochemical generators of chlorine that may be able to fulfill a community's needs for effective disinfectants for water or surfaces by using just salt water and a simple battery source, such as a car or motorcycle battery—an intervention that could have profound health implications for populations in low-resource settings.
- The Defense Threat Reduction Agency is conducting groundbreaking work on vaccine and chemical reagent thermo-stabilization as well as point-of-care diagnostic tests for infectious diseases, with positive implications for both global health and US military health in low-resource settings.
- The Army and Navy overseas medical research laboratories are part of the vital global health research network, and the staff of the infectious disease programs have years of hands-on experience with some of the most deadly global diseases.
- The Army co-developed the antimalarial drug candidate Tafenoquine, which is currently in phase 3 clinical trials and is a potential single-dose treatment for the radical cure of *P.vivax* malaria.
- The Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program's Peer Reviewed Medical Research program includes tuberculosis (TB) as one of its priority research areas; a key focus for research as drug resistance continues to grow and new tools are urgently needed to tackle TB and its potential impact on military personnel stationed in areas where TB is endemic.

The advancement of global health through new innovations is bolstered by the DoD's research and support of product development. Only by sustaining commitment to medical R&D will we protect servicemen and women from endemic and emerging global diseases and maintain recent gains in global health.

We urge you to work with DoD to prioritize research and product development for global health diseases within their budgets and programming plans, fund infectious disease R&D accounts as robustly as possible, and protect agency-wide funding for global health R&D. Specifically, it is critical to support infectious disease research at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and the Naval Medical Research Center, including their work on chemoprophylaxis, disease surveillance technologies, novel vaccines, and other countermeasures for diseases of military and global health importance. We also urge you to consider increased support for DoD infectious disease research programs as part of the Administration's proposal to increase DoD funding in FY19.

We understand the unique pressures you face in setting priorities for our nation and our military. Global health research protects the lives of our soldiers and millions of people around the world, fosters goodwill that enhances our national security, and creates jobs and economic growth at home. These benefits are unquestionably among the nation's highest priorities.

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 Director Jamie Bay Nishi at jnishi@ghtcoalition.org or (202) 822-0033 if you have questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,



Aeras



American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene



AVAC



Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation



Global Health Council



Global Health Technologies Coalition



HarvestPlus



International AIDS Vaccine Initiative



Infectious Diseases Society of America



PATH



Population Council



RESULTS



Sabin Vaccine Institute



Treatment Action Group



TB Alliance



Washington Global Health Alliance