

**Testimony Submission by Jamie Bay Nishi, Director, Global Health Technologies Coalition
Prepared for the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Addressing the US Agency for International Development**

On behalf of the Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC), a group of 30 nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and aligned businesses advancing policies to accelerate the creation of new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other tools that bring healthy lives within reach for all people, I am providing testimony on fiscal year 2021 (FY21) appropriations for global health programs at the US Agency for International Development (USAID). As our country grapples with COVID-19 and considers how we can support a global response to defeat the pandemic for good, we strongly urge the Committee to continue its established support for global health research and development (R&D) by:

1. Sustaining and supporting US investment in global health research and product development by robustly funding the Global Health accounts at USAID and the State Department. This means rejecting cuts to global health programs called for by the Administration for FY21 and supporting, at minimum, sustained funding at FY20 levels for each disease or population-specific program under the USAID and State Department global health accounts. As there is no specific line item that dictates funding for global health R&D, it is important to uphold investment in the entire Global Health Programs account. We ask that this support not come at the expense of other poverty-focused humanitarian and development accounts.
2. Instructing USAID—in collaboration with other agencies involved in global health—to prioritize R&D within each of the disease and condition areas under USAID’s Global Health Programs account and requiring leaders at the State Department and USAID to work together with other US agencies to develop a whole-of-government global health R&D strategy to ensure that US investments in global health research are efficient, coordinated, and streamlined.
3. Calling for the expansion of the annual report on USAID’s health-related research and development strategy to include specific funding amounts dedicated to research and product development by each program; specific information about health product development goals and timelines; details about USAID investments in drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and devices; details about collaborations with other federal agencies and private-sector partners; and an assessment of any critical gaps in product development for global health and recommendations for filling such gaps, and calling for the public release of the annual report required by the Global Health Innovation Act (P.L. 115-411), which details the development and use of global health innovations by the programs, projects, and activities of USAID—both reports vital to transparency and oversight.
4. Resourcing USAID to advance and deliver innovations to help low- and middle-income countries prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19 and other pandemic threats.

GHTC members strongly believe that to meet the world’s most pressing global health needs, it is critical to invest in research today so that the most effective health solutions are available now and in the future. Sustainable investment in R&D for a broad range of neglected diseases and health conditions is essential to tackle both endemic and emerging global health challenges that impact people around the world and at home in the United States. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated again that R&D must be the tip of the spear of our response to global

health emergencies and that innovation is our exit strategy from the economic and social crises spurred by the public health containment measures necessitated by our lack of effective tools.

This reality holds across many everyday emergencies in global health—conditions affecting communities around the globe that cause suffering and death often absent from the headlines. While we have made tremendous gains in global health, millions of people around the world are still threatened by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and other neglected diseases and health conditions. In 2018, TB killed 1.5 million people, surpassing deaths from HIV/AIDS, while 1.7 million people were newly diagnosed with HIV. Nearly half the global population remains at risk for malaria, and drug-resistant strains are growing. Of all global maternal and child deaths, 80% occur in sub-Saharan Africa, with 1 out of every 13 children in the region dying before the age of 5—often from vaccine-preventable or other communicable diseases.

These figures highlight that new tools and technologies are critical, both to address unmet global health needs and to address challenges of drug resistance, outdated and toxic treatments, and difficulty administering current health technologies in poor, remote, and unstable settings. We must also continue investing in the next generation of tools to prepare for emerging threats. As humans live closer and closer to wildlife, the threat of emerging infectious disease outbreaks will intensify. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated once again that we do not readily have all the tools needed to prevent, diagnose, and treat many neglected and emerging infectious diseases—a reality brought into sharp focus during the Zika and West African Ebola epidemics just a few years ago. Yet, the impact of the rVSV-ZEBOV (ERVEBO) Ebola vaccine on the ongoing Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrates the power of having the right tool at the right time to respond to a health emergency. ERVEBO has been used to vaccinate more than 250,000 at-risk individuals in the area. With a 97.5% efficacy rate against the Ebola Zaire virus, this vaccine is highly protective and is now a vital tool for this and future Ebola outbreaks—and it was developed with help and funding from the US government. It is critical we keep investing in the development of next-generation tools so they are ready to go when we need them.

USAID is the only US agency with a mandate to focus on global health and development. For that reason, USAID is uniquely positioned to support the end-to-end development of new global health technologies—from defining a global health challenge, to designing a tool to address it, developing that tool through clinical trials, and delivering that tool to communities most in need—in a way that is not replicated elsewhere in the US government, particularly for late-stage research and product development. USAID’s global presence and unique understanding of the needs of patients in different settings and contexts is key to developing health innovations that are transformative on the ground. We applaud the efforts that USAID has made in fostering innovation in health technologies, including:

- Supporting research to develop safe, effective, and accessible tools to prevent HIV in the developing world—including HIV vaccines and microbicides, which have tremendous potential to prevent HIV infection in women—and a low-cost, rapid, disposable HIV/AIDS diagnostic test designed for infants.
- Supporting the development of vaccines, antimalarials, insecticides, and novel vector control tools against malaria, including a promising single-dose cure.
- Playing a key role in the global effort to fight TB by supporting research to develop new therapeutics, including innovative drug regimens and diagnostics for drug-susceptible and drug-resistant TB. The world’s first child-friendly TB medicine was developed with seed funding from USAID, and now USAID is supporting an all-oral treatment regimen in late-

stage clinical trials that could reduce the time it takes to treat drug-susceptible TB from 6 months to 4 months.

- Developing interventions to help women and children during childbirth in low-resource settings where there may not be electricity, refrigeration, or trained health workers.
- Developing tools for low-resource settings to combat emerging infectious diseases, primarily through the Grand Challenges for Ebola and Zika programs, a model that could be replicated and resourced to save lives and end the global COVID-19 pandemic for good.

USAID is an important partner in global health product development, and it is critical for the agency to bolster this function of its global health programming. This means that global health programs within USAID require robust funding to ensure they have sufficient resources for both ongoing programs and forward-looking R&D efforts. For the vast majority of USAID's global health programming, there are no dedicated funding streams or programs expressly supporting global health R&D. This means that decisions to invest in developing new global health technologies—the tools needed to make programming more successful and efficient and to further the agency's global health mission—are made at the program level, based on funding allocations for each disease or population-specific health area. To ensure research is appropriately prioritized, global health programs need robust resources. Funding cuts—such as those proposed in the Administration's FY18, FY19, FY20, and FY21 budget requests—would put significant strain on USAID's global health programs and jeopardize the agency's ability to balance current programming demands with needs for new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other tools to accelerate global health gains.

This is even more true as COVID-19 strains the delivery of essential health services globally and forces USAID programs to adapt to maintain progress against the full range of health challenges. GHTC supports robust supplemental funding for USAID Global Health Programs in future emergency COVID-19 funding bills, and urges the Committee to consider resourcing USAID's unique capabilities in R&D to develop COVID-19 detection, prevention, and treatment tools designed for use in challenging low-resource settings, where interventions being developed in and for high-income countries may not be usable. The Grand Challenge model deployed during the Ebola and Zika global health emergencies holds tremendous promise to advance desperately-needed tools for a global response to COVID-19 and other emerging health threats, but USAID needs dedicated resources to devote to R&D while also responding to emergency programming needs.

USAID recognizes the value of global health R&D and how new global health tools can curb infectious disease outbreaks, end preventable maternal and child deaths, and achieve an AIDS-free generation. The agency's annual report on its Health-Related Research and Development Strategy is an important tool in which USAID details its work in global health R&D and describes how these efforts advance the Agency's overarching global health goals. Yet, over time, the level of detail included in this annual report has diminished, reducing the report's functionality as a tool of transparency and oversight. For that reason, we urge the Committee to include report language in the FY21 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill directing USAID to include in the report the specific funding amounts dedicated to research and product development by each program within the Bureau for Global Health; specific information about health product development goals and timelines; details about USAID investments in drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and devices; details about collaborations with other federal agencies and private-sector partners; and an assessment of any critical gaps in product development for global health and recommendations for filling such gaps. This level of reporting

is critical to provide insight into how USAID thinks strategically about R&D investments and ensure that partners have the information they need about the Agency's goals and priorities to pursue opportunities to collaborate on life-saving R&D.

Thanks to strong Congressional support for transparency and oversight of the agency's work on global health research, the Global Health Innovation Act (P.L. 115-411) passed at the end of the 115th Congress authorizes, for five years, a separate annual report that details the use of global health innovations broadly in the programs, projects, and activities of USAID and describes how USAID collaborates with other agencies in support of global health product development. We urge the committee to direct USAID to make this report public on the Agency's website or through other channels to ensure its maximum impact.

In addition, while there are areas of USAID's global health portfolio that are leading the way in R&D, there are areas where a lack of resources and prioritization are acute. For example, USAID does not currently incorporate research for new vaccines for TB into its programming and has made limited investments in new preventative technologies, despite TB becoming the world's greatest infectious disease killer. USAID could also advance its role in R&D for NTDs. While the agency does important work to provide treatments for five of the most prevalent NTDs, new tools are needed to reach the end game for these most common NTDs, including more sensitive diagnostics to ensure that elimination goals have been met. Relatively small investments in R&D for new NTD tools could have an incredible return.

In addition to USAID, support for global health R&D in the US government comes from the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Each of these agencies plays a unique and essential role in moving new global health technologies from concept to reality, and strong interagency collaboration is essential to leverage limited US government resources and ensure taxpayer dollars are used most effectively. To this end, we urge the Committee to encourage USAID to work with CDC, DoD, FDA, NIH, HHS, and BARDA to develop a whole-of-government strategy for global health R&D to coordinate priorities and resources and streamline operations.

US government investments in R&D—through USAID and other agencies—yield benefits in addition to humanitarian and development goals. As COVID-19 has laid bare, health crises abroad can quickly become health crises at home, and it is imperative that we sustainably invest in R&D for a broad range of neglected infectious diseases so that we understand emerging disease threats and have tools ready to go when we need them. Global health is American health, and investments in global health R&D are investments in global health security. Global health R&D is also a smart economic investment in the United States, where it drives job creation, spurs business activity, and engages academic institutions. In fact, 89 cents of every US dollar invested in global health R&D benefits US-based researchers, many of whom conduct their research at US universities. US government investment in global health R&D between 2007 and 2015 generated an estimated 200,000 new jobs and \$33 billion in economic growth.

At this time of crisis, Congress must make forward-thinking choices to respond to the emergency before us and draw on the painful lessons emerging from it to ensure that we are primed and ready for the next health threat—while also committing to continue progress against the full range of global health challenges. Global health research, which improves the lives of people around the world while creating jobs, spurring economic growth, and supporting US interests and health security, is a win-win investment.