

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

As the nation's leading organizations representing state, territorial, and local governmental public health agencies, we urge you to reject the Administration's efforts to terminate the relationship between the United States and the World Health Organization (WHO) and to instead fully fund its work. The Microbes do not respect international borders. Uncontrolled virus transmission anywhere can add fuel to the US COVID-19 fire. WHO has been leading the unprecedented global response to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is imperative that we preserve a strong U.S.-WHO partnership to achieve and maintain critical U.S. national health and security objectives.

The U.S. has long recognized the unparalleled capabilities of the WHO to help save lives, improve global disease detection, and coordinate a global public health response. As a result, the U.S. has consistently been the largest donor to the WHO. The WHO's efforts strengthen America's health security and economic interests because healthy countries are stable countries that are far less likely to allow an outbreak of disease go unchecked, devastate its population and economy, and spread globally. The U.S. healthcare and public health systems have and continue to benefit from WHO diseases control efforts like the eradication of smallpox and the soon to be eradication of polio. WHO guidelines and recommendation are incorporated into federal, state and local public health strategies.

Since 1948, when the U.S. helped establish the World Health Organization (WHO), the agency has been a steadfast partner with the U.S. The WHO provides vital technical capacity and cooperation, which many countries rely on to keep their populations safe, by helping to identify and combat infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and outbreaks like Ebola and Zika.

Its unique presence in 150 countries around the world, a legal mandate as defined in the International Health Regulations, and a health emergencies program that operates at multiple levels of governmental health organization, combine to give only the WHO the capacity to gather public health data from any country in the world and use it to quickly develop and disseminate technical guidance to help countries prepare public health responses.

Paramount to the on-going coronavirus global health crisis, only the WHO has the global convening power to marshal a partnership with Member States, major donors, and the private sector to create the ACT Accelerator. The initiative is pre-positioning manufacturing capacity

and distribution channels that will ensure that all countries will have access to future therapies and vaccines faster and at a fair and affordable price. Ensuring all countries have access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments will save lives and is key to managing future waves of the virus.

Given the WHO's indispensable roles in global health and the direct impact of that work on our nation's health and security objectives, our organizations call on you to reject the Administration's attempts to terminate the U.S. relationship with the WHO, and to fully fund the WHO in the federal appropriations for Fiscal Year 2021 and future COVID-19 supplemental appropriation bills.

Sincerely,

Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
National Association of County and City Health Officials