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DR JOANNE CARTER:
Welcome everyone, I am Joanne Carter, Executive Director of RESULTS. I hope everyone got some restorative time with friends and family during the holiday season. It is great to be together for the first national webinar of 2025 in our 45th year of RESULTS. A special welcome to (Unknown name) for the fellowship that just kicked off Wednesday night. Before we go on I want to take a moment to acknowledge that devastating wildfires that continue in the Los Angeles area. We hold those impacted in our thoughts which I know includes RESULTS volunteers and their families. We also know after the immediate danger subsides, many especially who were already vulnerable will struggle to meet their basic needs.

With the inauguration around the corner, I know there is deep uncertainty. We are well aware of a suite of proposed policies from the incoming president that would set back the fight against poverty. I also know that for many online today, the rhetoric and ideas for policies being floated are deeply personal. As communities who have been directly targeted not only in the recent election, but throughout history. As a network we stand together. We are here to support each other and lean on each other. And we know from our advocacy that being in action especially together is an antidote to despair and resignation. Our work with the Congress in particular is all the more important right now.

The first hundred days of a new Congress represents a key window for influence. And we have to get there early and shape the mandate. Some come to Washington for the very first time... All of them can influence life-changing policies and influence life-and-death decisions and all of them need to hear from you.

Over the last year, we have demonstrated what can happen when you raise your voices together. While in 2023, many congressional staffers were saying privately that the child tax credit was a partisan nonstarter. But you tirelessly show the members of Congress and their staff how ending child poverty is an issue that can transcend party affiliation. Many of you shared lived experiences with the child tax credit which is the most powerful way to make the case. I want to give a special acknowledgment to experts on poverty you have so powerfully shared their child tax credit experience and insight with lawmakers and the media and their community. As they celebrate their 10th anniversary this year, I invite everyone here to get to know our 10 year cohort and the link is dropped in the chat now. We would not be where we are right now without their leadership on the CTC and so much more. And today we talk about expanding the child tax credit going forward. This is a top early priority for the new congressional leadership and administration. Our job now is to get into Senate and House offices early and make sure every member here's that this upcoming tax package has to include expansions of the child tax credit and other refundable tax credits that especially benefit those struggling to meet basic needs. Many of you have been instrumental in building support for the global fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria so it can support affected countries and communities to save over 65 million lives. And in this precarious political time, enforcing that strong bipartisan congressional support for the mobile fund and global health, and building new allies, will be the difference between driving the end of these diseases or tragically losing ground and millions of lives.

Virginia volunteer grace (Unknown name) went to a town hall meeting with the candidate running for the house late last year and afterwards introduced herself as a RESULTS volunteer and raised the global fund specifically. She asked the candidate about his personal experience with the issues and he says he does value global health after his own international experience. They hear our stories and we hear theirs. Representative Penman has a new ally. And again, connecting early with the lawmakers can create exponential impact so retail now for those meetings. Today I am so excited to have with us one of the most visionary, inspiring and effective global health advocates in the world.

Linda Mafu has spent her life as a leader in the fight for health equity in the fight against HIV AIDS... She has been outspoken in support of gender equity and LGBTQIA plus rights and the connection between oppression and health outcomes. She works for the global fund and is a huge part of why the global fund has spearheaded investment in leadership the most effective and often targeted communities. There is no one else I would rather have on the first hundred days to speak with us about building connection with decision-makers and never giving up.

I will turned over to Colin Smith for dialogue.

COLIN SMITH:
Happy new year everyone. Heading into this challenging year I'm especially thrilled to have this dialogue right at the start for all the reasons that Joanne mentioned. And as the global fund gears up for the next phase of its fight against AIDS, TB and malaria which we will hear about in a second, we are working to make sure the US does its part.

So, Linda is the head of the political and civil society advocacy department at the global fund having worked previously in leadership roles at Embassy International in South Africa, the treatment action plan, the world AIDS campaign and in the job she is in at the global fund, head of political (Unknown term) advocacy, this is a very big job in any year but an enormous one in the year ahead. In the, we are so lucky to have you in this role right now. I am grateful to be a partner.

Your colleague said this isn't just the next replenishment of the global fund it is the first replenishment in the new era. So, I would love to turn it over to you for opening comments on what is ahead and what this new era means. You are still on mute.

LINDA MAFU:
Thank you so much. Thank you for inviting me and I really want to appreciate the volunteers that continue to remind our government, globally, locally, about the importance of global solidarity. The importance of ensuring that no one is left behind in the true sense of it because when we are focusing on ensuring that no one is left behind, we make sure that no one ever experiences financial hardship as a result of seeking health services.

This is very, very important as an agenda. Take you so much for inviting me to share insight about the work of the global fund partnership and the impact we are achieving together. Your dedication as volunteers plays a very, very important role as I have said in advancing the fight against AIDS, TB and malaria. Grassroots is part of my heartbeat and that the heartbeat of global health progress. Your efforts inspire action. I come from the global South, from South Africa, and when I joined the HIV movement, it was at a time when my government was not making decisions about ensuring that people have access to treatment, access to healthcare services for particularly people with HIV. They were huge human rights violations and there we are also telling us it is expensive to buy treatment. However, the volunteers all over the world, the advocates all over the world supported us and gave us a very, very important thing:hope. We had hoped that the world would change and hope that we could access treatment. And what was most important was that it was all the voices from different immunities that were holding government accountable, that were calling for global solidarity and global fund is that global solidarity.

Global fund is about equity and about addressing affordable and access to healthcare services for all. And therefore, for us when we are talking about resource mobilization, we are not only talking about the replenishment, a critical milestone to secure the resources needed to continue saving lives but also to ensure that we reach the 2030 sustainable development goals we have been talking about. We need sufficient resources. We need to be able to remind parliamentarians, decision-makers and policymakers at all the different Global Partners to come to that. Will will fund is one organization that is about coming together and working together to solve these big issues that are facing humanity and not only people in the global South, but humanity in its totality.

The replenishment takes place in a very challenging time, we are faced with challenging economic times, as a result of COVID 19.

We are challenged by climate change, the impact of climate change on health. The rising geopolitical tensions and changes as well as huge priorities that are competing for donor budgets. We are in a crisis phase. We usually say that the replenishment is going to be hard but this one in particular is going to be really hard. But we can't despair, we cannot take action, we need to stand up and mobilize and stop at nothing to ensure we protect the health and well-being of all people. The fight against AIDS, TB and malaria cannot wait. We cannot postpone it. So far, we have done very well. We have done very well in saving lives. We have contributed, all of us and all the people on the call have contributed to ensuring that we save at least 65 million lives and that is since 2002.

I am one of those 65 million lives and many of my family members are one of those 65 million lives. We have reduced the number of deaths and the death rate from HIV, from TB and from malaria and that is really awesome results. However we have also been faced by COVID 19 which has had a huge impact on many things that set us back and we need to get there contract and the replenishment is about getting us back on track. And ensuring we are hitting the targets we have set particularly for 2030.

The rising (Indiscernible) is a challenge for us, health inequities is a risk as well. The laws that are spreading in different countries, we have seen some countries coming with laws that are discriminating against certain populations. They are also taking us back and becoming part of the setbacks in terms of the goals we have set. However, the global fight is done very well in terms of working with countries to address some of those key challenges. We are embracing innovative solutions and therefore the replenishment is also about resourcing those innovative solutions including the mosquito nets, and ensuring that people have access to that and we are supporting them to access those mosquito nets. We are looking at innovation around the shorter TB treatment regimen. We are not seeing just resources for health but specific and targeted in terms of what we think the replenishment should address this times around. It is quite important in the replenishment. And HIV prevention tools are quite important as we all know, if we are just looking at the infection for adults and girls and young women, ages between 15 and 24 is quite high and one thing we are looking for is around long-acting HIV prevention tools. It can be managed by young people but also all the populations in general.

So the replenishment, I am quite excited as I always see it as a challenging replenishment, it is addressing a couple of things and not just about raising funds, it is about renewing the global solidarity. It is about prioritizing the health of the world particularly for the most vulnerable populations. It is about ensuring that those most in need have access to lifesaving medical services and treatment without experiencing the financial hardship. It is about upholding the human rights and dignity of all people in all their diversities. It is about demonstrating that our commitment to end AIDS, TB and malaria is not a passing trend, it is about ensuring that AIDS, TB and malaria are no longer a public health threat in our communities. So when things get hard we have new challenges and we mobilize and organize. We look at how do we package this important agenda in a way that our leaders, the policymakers, our decision-makers are able to understand this and are able to then take action. You don't want to only enable people to understand but they should take action.

You talk to the heart and the mind so that we get to a point that we resource this key issue affecting many, many communities. By mobilizing support, particularly from policymakers and government, you can help us to secure commitments. You can inspire action and even ensure that we meet our shared goals of ending these diseases.

When the volunteers are speaking to the decision-makers, policymakers, parliamentarians, enable them to be informed and as Joanne said at the beginning, I have been talking to the presidency in South Africa and talking to different departments, the Department of Health are clear about what the global fund does and why it needs to be supported. The Department of international relations have no clue and we need to create a learning environment for all of them.

So assuming that the people that are joining the policymakers, it is important that we be educating and find ways of informing them so that they may decisions that are able to support the work that we do.

In terms, just to round off, in terms of the replenishment we have some things we need to address. We have immense challenges around TB. 9.4 million people fell ill in 2022. We know that (Indiscernible) for TB and services that should be available and therefore this is not an excuse. 9.4 million people felt ill with TB in 2022. That should not happen. It is preventable. It is something that we need to look into. Malaria caused over (Indiscernible) deaths and these are preventable deaths. And it affects millions of people with 500,000 AIDS related deaths annually and all of those are again preventable deaths. We can decrease that number.

In terms of the opportunities we have huge opportunities like upset already. We have the long acting prep that we can resource, and the short-acting treatment, and the climate resistant malaria prevention tool. Leadership and human rights is needed in our communities and again, the global funds is committed to invest and support that. That is the core, empowering communities, ensuring that we, because if we have impaired communities that are able to follow up the budget, are able to follow-up domestic results allocation it is quite important and it is a really strong message to send out there increasing domestic resources and ensuring those resources are allocated to health and followed up on and checked. We also support countries to ensure that community healthcare workers, localized solutions within the communities, so that people are able to access equitable and sustained health systems. We had challenges that we're really shown by COVID 19 and now the AIDS replenishment is seeking to focus on strengthening sustainable resilience for health because that then means that the health systems are not only able to respond to existing epidemics but they are also responding to new pandemics like COVID and many more pandemics. We need really strong systems and we are working with different governments and planning to invest resources from the replenishment to strengthen the health systems.

In terms of where we want to focus on the replenishment, of course universal health coverage and ensuring that the (Indiscernible) are meant and the strengthening of health systems and preparedness for future pandemics is quite important for us. These targets will enable us to really address the unfinished agenda of AIDS, TB and malaria and therefore for us, this replenishment is about ensuring that there is progress and the progress is sustained. I am going to stop here and if there are more questions, please, over to you.

COLIN SMITH:
Thank you so much. You made such a powerful and broad reaching case for why this year for the global fund is so important. One question and you hit on this but I'd love for you to talk a little more, the global fund talks about how directly affected communities are at the center. Can you talk about what it means practically for the global fund and how it makes it different from some other approaches to health and poverty?

LINDA MAFU:
First of all if you just look at how the global fund partnership, and I insisted is a partnership. How the partnership looks like, we have communities represented at the bold level of the fund. The communities are influencing the decision and strategy of the global fund and it's very important. The second piece is that at country level where there is a development of programs and identification of priorities, communities have to be at the center of that and it is one of the criteria for eligibility when it comes to it. Ensuring that the voices of communities are at the center. We also have within my department, engagement of civil society and communities in resource mobilization but also tracking the resources and how the resources are being spent and then feeding that back to us so we do the advocacy internally.

When we are talking about communities, it is diverse communities. We have communities within the key population, their voices are quite important because their experiences are different from other civil society partners. So all of this community partners are important for us in terms of decision-making, implementation and tracking because that is quite important for the success and we can't say we are successful as a partnership when the communities are not at the center.

COLIN SMITH:
Thank you so much. You also talked at the start of your remarks about early days in your advocacy at a national level when you had government leaders were not respecting human rights, not interested in the work you were prioritizing. As we go into a year where we know that we have in the United States a huge number of champions for the global fund and global health, but also that we are expecting a number of attacks on human rights and funding for health, what is your advice and suggestions for walking into challenging meetings and how to approach those from the perspective of sustaining our values and standing up for what we believe in and for effectiveness in getting to the outcome that we know is possible and needed.

LINDA MAFU:
The first sentence I would say is don't give up. Don't ever give up, keep on keeping on. Most importantly, the evidence, the information because it is very important. If you are able to develop consumable information for the decision-makers and policymakers, so that they understand the depth of the problem, the cost of inaction. If they don't take the action, how would it look like? And also, giving them the power that if they make certain decisions, they can change the trajectory. That is quite important. I always talk as an activist because that is who I am. So we can also partner because we have, we will have our investment is already so the investment case is your advocacy tool that tells you this is where we are coming from, this is where we are and this is how the future looks like. This is how each dollar would be spent in terms of ensuring that we save lives.

So, I think the first thing is the attitudes that we are not giving up. We are going to do this and we will make the change and also the information, the evidence to ensure that we change the minds, the political will. It is not going to be an easy one, it is not going to be an easy one.

COLIN SMITH:
For one final question, and I also know, I realize it is late at night for you on a Saturday and we were on a plane all day yesterday, but a final question, I have heard you say before "the fire in your belly has to be stronger than the fire outside" when it comes to advocacy and challenging times. How do you stoke the fire and what is your advice for the year ahead?

LINDA MAFU:
In my house I have a son who is gay and very happy. One of the things that I always think about when I'm thinking about the fire in my belly is that I need to make sure that the generation and my children and others behind me do not deal with some of the mountains that I have dealt with. I make the mountains at least look like hills. So the fire in my belly to keep pushing, to influence change is always stronger than the challenges that I see. And I also always ensure that I have conversations with people like yourself, and people, I keep trying to have conversations and attack some of the challenges because I may be sitting in a certain position and seeing it as a challenge and yet you have a solution from your end. So the conversations and discussions in the problem-solving together is quite important.

But that fire is as important as the outcasts.

COLIN SMITH:
Thank you, we are as a partnership, as you know there is the RESULTS network across the US and many action partners around the world. And we are grateful to be your partners in this work and will be working to build that fire and all of our bellies and work together over this next year. Thank you so much for taking the time to join us again, especially on a Saturday night. And we are going to walk through some of the particular political tools we have for the US government next and are really excited for the next global fund investment case as you were saying as a tool for advocacy and inspiration. About what is possible and what is needed with new resourcing.

Thank you for all you are doing and know you can rely on this network into the next year.

LINDA MAFU:
Thank you, thank you so much for having me and we really, really appreciate this from the global fund. The executive director of global fund is always excited to hear the work that the advocates are doing so we really appreciate what you are doing because without the work that you are doing, many of us would be here. We would be still dealing with mountains so thank you so much.

COLIN SMITH:
Thank you Linda. Alright, I wish I wasn't now having to turn to the specifics rate after hearing that perspective and guidance and strategy from Linda.

But I wanted to share a little bit more specifically about what it can look like in our advocacy work in the US. I hope that all of us can hold on to what I am about to walk through, it is political tactics and funding numbers and what we want to see the US government do but it is about making possible the things and the impact that the global fund as Linda described.

Important contacts going into this year, nothing is certain but to say plainly we have every reason to believe we will see a string of incredibly harmful proposals from the White House on global health and poverty. It could start as soon as they are sworn in next week. Policy changes, and attempt to withdraw from the WHO, trying to massively cut international funds. All of these things have been floated and were tried in the last term. We will be and are ready to respond but we want to set a bold agenda. One that is not just possible, the one that is needed for all the reasons Linda mentioned. I think really, really critically on the global fund in the US right now, this is an agenda that will not happen without us.

At the most basic level we will be calling on the US government to step up and contribute a full one third of the global funds total need. So the US has historically since the start of the global fund matched contributions to the fund for every two dollars from other donors the US has put in one. In the past, President Bush and Biden and Obama, all announce pledges to do this but our top focus next year will be not just on the White House but on Congress. They were the ones that upheld the US support for the global fund during trump's last term and ultimately it is up to them is the final deciders on federal spending. If the administration makes a good pledge will be up to Congress to deliver it. If they make a bad pledge Congress can overrule it. If there is no pledge at all Congress can step in and get the job done. In a year that will have just a dizzying number of threats, this is one area where the outcome is very much not known and very much hours to shape. And you have done this before.

So, let's go to the slide. During the last trump administration, the White House proposed at 29% cut to the global fund. Nearly 1/3. But you rallied Congress through sign-on letters, media, one-on-one meetings, getting numbers of Congress reaching out to their counterparts to not only reject it but to increase by 16%.

That proposed cut in 2019, if the proposal had gone through, a 29% cut it is fair to say would've had an unimaginably catastrophic impact on the global fund. But you all heard Linda talk about the 65 million lives saved to the global fund partnership and its founding. That number, the 65 million has gone up 27 million lives since this attempted cut you helped to stop. 27 million people who are alive today since 2019 with the support of US funding alongside the work that communities, governments and local leaders are doing all around the world. So as we go into a year where there will be lots of other threats that feel really, really urgent, in my field further away and less urgent but it is not. This is...

The replenishment process will officially kick off in the next month or two when the financial ask of the world's government will get unveiled, the investment case from the global fund that will say what it intends to do with the resources that are raised this year. It will outline the need in the world, the state of the fight against the three diseases and what is possible. But we are not going to wait to start our advocacy. That is what the first 100 days campaign is about.

You will hear more of the specifics on the how in terms of setting up meetings with Congress and how we go about advocacy but to focus first on what we are asking embers of Congress to do during this time.

I will start on global issues and on the global fund in particular and then handed over to my colleague to do the same on US poverty issues.

We have all this written down on her action and analyze new webpage on the RESULTS website. We will walk you through the resources later in the webinar. But what we do to position the global fund with members of Congress and move them into action during the first 100 days, will shape not just how the US shows up later this year but what the future of the global fund's work looks like.

The role of Congress is here: on funding, Donald Trump is not the final decision-maker. The two most important people are the current shares of the foreign aid subcommittees, state and foreign operation subcommittees of the Appropriations Committee in both the House and Senate so the two folks who write the foreign aid spending bills, from the majority party this year, our long-standing global fund champions. I will ask you to indulge me on some of the specifics.

The chair of the committee in the house, the lead Republican on the foreign aid spending committee is from Florida. During the last trump presidency (Unknown name) cosponsored one that passed the house unanimously. Under his leadership this last year, his committee provided more for the global fund in its annual spending bill than the Democratic counterparts in the Senate did. It is not a critique of the Democratic (Indiscernible). They didn't need to come forward with that amount of funding but he wanted to and was committed to this. The resolution he was on during the last administration on the global fund the past in immensely -- unanimously, was led by Marco Rubio. In the Senate on the same resolution in 2019, the current counterpart on the foreign aid committee Senator Lindsey Graham was on the resolution during that time. He also led a bipartisan letter to the trump administration that year calling for a pulled an early pledge to the global fund. I heard him say in front of a room of Washington insiders, "the global fund has been one of the most successful programs in the history of government, the numbers speak for themselves." These are the folks who will be writing the bills that decide the amount that go to the global fund every year.

The Democratic counterparts feel similarly as do a long line of members of Congress and I am not rattling this off as a way to say that it will be easy, that it is decided because it is quite the opposite. I actually feel if I am being honest, scared and somewhat confident that this bipartisan support could crumble this year because members of Congress who support global health will face extraordinary pressure to back down from the position and given to cuts and follow the lead of the White House.

This morning I read a five global policy predictions for 2025 from a well respected global journalism the first thing on the list was at this kind of funding will get permanently slashed. It was a prediction about what will happen without advocacy and that is where we come in. For this year to build new champions for the global fund to give the champions we already have especially the ones in key leadership roles, like (Unknown name) and Graham as cheers of the critical committees, we are trying to give them the backing and support to do what is needed. To talk to a couple strategies for how we can do that:
the first is a relatively new one. One we haven't used as much recently but I am really excited about it. Those leaders of the subcommittees, we want them to really see and feel the depth of the support they have from the colleagues in Congress. Not just in terms of volume but in terms of priority.

One thing we want to encourage members of Congress to do is write personally to the subcommittee chairs about the global fund. When you have your meetings this spring, that could mean walking into talk to either a member of Congress or the foreign policy aide to say "will you show congressional leaders that you support the global fund? Will you write them personally to the respective subcommittee leadership". We write to the House Republican or House Democrat? Will you write to them about the global fund? Them for leadership and let them know you support the global fund? Let them know that you have the backing of the constituents, that's us, to do this.

We want to encourage as many members of Congress as we can to write personally in this way. It is something Republicans and Democrats alike can do, writing to the lead person from their own party. It creates a unique opportunity where in some cases it might be a champion action. If your member of Congress says yes to joining sign-on letters and is ready for the next step let's ask them to do this. It is also a strategy for members of Congress who maybe have been willing to step up publicly on the global fund in that way before. Especially in this new context if they are wary of taking a public position that they think is at odds with the White House. This is acquired or but personal and hugely powerful way for them to use influence with the key folks who will actually make the decisions. There are many ways to get creative on this in terms of showing constituent support and what we are asking members of Congress to do and how to craft the message to the committee leadership. It is something that RESULTS staff can provide sample language, template letters and help you think through who and how to target for this kind of outreach. It is not the only action numbers can take.

The next big one and I'll run through these more quickly. As the annual appropriations process. This is the annual process where funds are divvied up including things like global health. They are way behind on this right now and still sorting out the last fiscal year and have a deadline for that in March. He will come back to you with all the specifics of that process for next year starting in February.

We will approach that work on appropriations with the global fund is the top issue but also work across the range of global poverty parties that we care about nutrition to health. If you are super eager and know the ropes of the process, you do have all those materials ready and are happy to share them. Let us know. For now most congressional offices are not ready for those specific as purses for us to go in and tell them what we care about and the things we want to see them support this year like the global fund.

Throughout the year we will have other opportunities for members of Congress to come together publicly but there are a few more private things or personal things or individual things we can ask them to do.

In addition to writing to the subcommittee leadership is to write to other donor countries around the world. Embers of Parliament in other countries are deciding how much their countries will contribute to the global fund this year. Because the US makes a matching commitment with that one dollar for every two dollars for other donors. We can make sure other countries step up. It might be that you ask a member of Congress to have a relationship with someone in another country, a sister city or place you have traveled or someone you have strong ties? And asking that member of Congress to write personally to that person about the global fund asking them to prioritize it with their government and fulfill the US match.

It has a mutually beneficial impact with both encouraging other countries to step up and making our members of Congress step into that new leadership role. There are a slew of other things we can do cross members of Congress to show support publicly. Delivering a speech on the floor of Congress to and plan an in district event featuring a town hall.... Which features the global fund. Her working with us on any of the number of broader public tools we have coming up this year.

We will drop in the chat and the second an overview of the campaign and behind and the description of the champion actions you can use in nozzles will be on the website and you can find them through the link that was put in the chat already. I will answer couple of questions in the chat and I will hand this over now.

TaSHON THOMAS:
Perfect and thank you. Across our US and global priorities we'd made gains under every administration for the past 45 years. And see real opportunities as well as the need to defend against potentially devastating cuts this congressional season. We are ready to pull up our sleeves and constituent voices and our continued bipartisan engagement with congressional offices across the political spectrum that are as important as ever especially with the slim margins in both chambers it is likely that nothing can pass without true bipartisan support. But we shall see what will happen in 2025.

Heading into 2025 we will focus on building the strong bipartisan support we help to develop for equitable tax credits for working families, low-income workers and renters. We will defend against potentially devastating cuts to nutrition assistance particularly SNAP NWIC protection. We will influence these decisions that will influence many people. This could come up for debate quickly when negotiations begin over the debt ceiling which expired on January 2 of this year. Snap will be targeted for cuts and or reforms in the bill reauthorization. Restricting or reducing these services would have devastating impact particularly on growing children. As a reminder, Congress last extension expired in September of last year. In May of last year the House and Senate agriculture committee's release proposed frameworks for the reauthorization and at that time of course the house was Republican and the Senate was democratically controlled. While both versions included some bipartisan back legislation, the house proposal nearly $30 billion cut to SNAP but it did make it out of the floor.

The house bill contained draconian cuts that had not been supported to move forward and which had been due to run out of funding in March and face a $1 billion short fall and would have left millions of pregnant and postpartum women and their children without food and health assistance. Slashing nutrition assessment would have devastating impact particularly on growing children and we need to be sure we support our nutrition assistance programs and they retain the bipartisan backing.

There is virtually no area throughout the US which has not been negatively impacted by the housing crisis. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing the affordability crisis and homelessness crisis. Congress provides modest funding for housing assistance and homeless programs that already exist but these programs reach only a small segment of the people struggling with rents and sometimes have strict eligibility requirements. Skyrocketing rental costs have simply become so high that even employed renters cannot keep up. Existing tax benefits are not enough and not targeted towards renters. The tax code has long supported homeowners and builders, developers and landlords. Meanwhile renters receive nothing despite being taxpayers and contributing to our economy. A refundable tax credit will benefit many households that existing housing and homeless programs are unable to serve. Many states already have renter support programs in their tax code but the programs are often small and targeted to only a specific group and are not enough to address the nationwide affordability crisis. A refundable tax credit will be targeted to rent households with low incomes and paid out on a monthly basis. This would Out-of-pocket rent and ensure renters could afford a safe place to live without sacrificing other basic needs. It is an important step in order to fix the inequities of our tax system and address the affordable housing crisis.

And last on the policy goes for domestic... The first hundred days. Benjamin Franklin is noted as saying "nothing in this world is certain but death and taxes." While we cannot help with the former we can fight to ensure our tax code is equitable towards everyone. There will be major focus on federal tax policy this year as the 2017 job tax cuts and jobs act which included improvements to the CTC and the ITC expires. This represents a moment of both risk and opportunity for more equitable tax policies. We will urge that any potential tax deal includes the expansion of CTC benefits to the lowest income families and the ITC benefits for low-income workers. What we have been hearing just in the last couple of days is that a tax package is likely to move later in the year rather than immediately which gives us more time to hold meetings and generate media. However, we must keep Congress members and senators focused on the new baseline established in last year's tax package. Especially if there is a major push from other forces outside of the government to place an even more emphasis on tax cuts for major corporations. Last but certainly not least, we will have to protect a major win for our grassroots. Notably many of the experts on poverty worked on last year. That is the direct file program. After the start of this congressional session, 29 House members sent a letter to the Trump transition team regressing the get rid of the direct file program with day one executive orders. In 2024 direct file issued more than $90 million in tax refunds and collected $35 million in tax balances due. The system proved it could withhold, withstand a huge volume of traffic especially in the final days of the tax season. Indeed the pilot was so successful, when the IRS announced it would make it a permanent program, 12 additional states elected to offer this option to their taxpayers. During the 2025 tax season, 30 million taxpayers in 24 states will be eligible to file taxes using direct file. With 51% of the taxpayers in states that Trump carried. If direct file is canceled, taxpayers will have to revert back to paying the high cost for tax preparation services. In the end, results will remained focused on galvanizing our broad bipartisan support by mobilizing the entire network. Meeting with newly elected members of Congress, bolstering support for existing measures and ensuring intense conversations with members of both the house Ways and Means committee, the finance committee and Senate committees and house agriculture committees by talking about advocates once the assignments have been made. We still see shuffling in committees today so some members who may have been on these may not be on them tomorrow. In the first few months of 2025, this will present a very crucial opportunity for us to keep the door and get into the door early with new Congress members and the administration as a come together to set their legislative priorities for the term. It will be important to move quickly, to meet early and often given the Republican trifecta and how quickly things could move throughout the reconciliation process.

Our goal this year is to meet with 100% of our Senate and most of the house in early 2025 with a particular attention to the large number of incoming freshmen on key committees. We are eager to double down on building the grassroots network in rural and political relevant geographies over the next two years between now and the midterms. With that, I now send it over to my colleague Lisa for more grassroots updates on our first hundred days campaigns.

LISA MARCHAL:
Hi everybody and happy new year. I'm on the grassroots team with RESULTS. I am in Indianapolis, Indiana. I am pleased to be with you for the first national webinar of 2025. As we engage with this 119th Congress, your group planning process will be crucial to our collective success.

So, if you didn't already start planning in December, we hope your group will use your 2025 group roadmap, your individual group planning forms in the roadmapping guide by January 15 to create a plan for what you want to accomplish this year in the vein of everything we've heard from Linda and:and to Sean

Contact Jocelyn if you need access to your group's unique roadmap form and ask your regional coordinators or staff if you need other assistance.

If you are new to RESULTS group, welcome and we are glad to have you here as we engage in planning for 2025. If you are unsure of how to connect with the group in your state, contact grassroots@results.org and we will get you connected.

Your planning will contribute directly to a solid start for our first 100 days advocacy push. One of the important things you will do is name your Senate and House point persons as well as the number of lobby meetings you hope to hold. Now, remember that last year, you achieved 313 meetings across the Senate, the house and congressional candidates. That effort blanketed the country with a clear call to Congress that they must take action for sustainable poverty solutions.

As mentioned, our goal early this year is to carry last year's momentum into the new Congress. We want to meet with all Senate offices and key House committee meeting leaders, sharing with them our priorities for success. For some of you it will be an opportunity to meet with a member of Congress who is brand-new or meet with a continuing member of Congress you didn't get to meet with last year.

For others, to meet with congressional offices you know very well. For some, you will meet with members of Congress for the very first time because you are new to the network and to that again, we say a hearty welcome. You are in for a treat and we couldn't be more thrilled to have your passion and skill in the mix as we lobby together.

Now, a quick reminder of the Y for the first 100 days lobbying efforts. Why do we lobby? First we want to clearly articulate our parities. The priorities that were laid out for us. We are committed to a world beyond poverty and we propose effective policy solutions so we learn about the issues and we make clear requests as constituents. Second, we lobby to develop relationships. We have advocates who have worked with offices for many years and to those offices, we are trusted constituents who consistently provide quality information. We get to know the legislators we are working with and support the offices to hopefully become champions for ending poverty. Along the way we learn to work as a team.

Third, we lobby to build power. As we work as a network to blanket the Senate and House with our request, we build skills, we become more confident, and we become known. You are creating a movement. Different advocates are working with different legislators but together, we have the same policy goals and the same aspirations for the world. We become a force that can catalyze change.

So, as you complete your group planning, include the number of first 100 days lobby meetings that you hope to have. You will find loads of resources on our issues, a map of your held meetings and more on the mentioned 2025 action and allies page highlighting our 2025 work. Be bold in your goals! Go for it! And then remember these steps to success.

First, request. Request your Senate and House meetings now, booking them for February or after. In next weekâ€™s Weekly Update and on our website, weâ€™ll have a sample meeting request letter that will help. Remember, you donâ€™t need to know the exact ask or everything youâ€™ll say when you book your meetings. The general topics will suffice so that you can schedule with the right legislative aides.

Number two, prepare.This month we will have a lobby meeting planning form so that you can lay out the meeting agenda and encourage inclusive participation. We will have laser talks to help you prepare your requests. And we will have leave behinds for when the meeting is over. Materials will be made available over the course of the month, so keep checking back to our resources, not just on our Action and Allies campaign page, but also on our general lobbying page, too.

When you have a lobby meeting booked on a specific issue, you can schedule a time for your group to do lobby prep with our staff team by getting in touch with our colleague Katie Fleischer at kfleischer@results.org. Perhaps if your group has a standing meeting time, that can even be utilized for lobby prep!

Third, assess. If you need to know a bit more about your members of Congress, check out the 118th Congressional Scorecard for voting records, and register for the â€œResearching Your Members of Congressâ€ webinar series to be held at the end of January. Youâ€™ll find that webinar on our events page.

Fourth, report. Your meetingâ€™s not done until itâ€™s been reported! Youâ€™ll find a form on our website to help you record what happened during your successful meeting. Then fifth, don't skip this one, celebrate. You just move on. We are eager to move onto the next thing, we don't stop to celebrate what we accomplish together. Take a moment to take pride in a job well done before you move on. This is going to be a powerful winter and spring. We canâ€™t wait to see what we accomplish together. And now, Iâ€™m pleased to pass the mic to my colleague Melissa Strobel who has a bit of celebration for us. Melissa?

MELISSA STROBEL:

Thanks Lisa! I am RESULTS director at about McCallion from Virginia. I will be celebrating with you all today. It is my honor to work alongside many of you on this call, and our entire network of donors around the country and world who share our aspiration for a world beyond poverty, and whose support fuels our work.

I am joining you today to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to each of you on this call, as well as your fellow advocates and friends who are not live with us today. In 2024, nearly 900 people made one or more donations in support of RESULTS and our great mission.

With this support and the work of our incredible advocates, we are able to continue working until everyone in this country is safe from hunger, housing insecurity, and the trauma that comes with poverty, and until everyone in the world has access to the nutrition, healthcare, and basic education they need to survive and to thrive.

Your support, in any amount, has been hugely meaningful, and is critical to our work. RESULTS doesnâ€™t take government funding, and so a strong foundation of individual donors is essential for our nonpartisan work. I am deeply inspired by your commitment to this work, and your generosity to our mission. As we look ahead to 2025, I want to take a moment to pause and reflect on some of your generosity in 2024. On several occasions last year I joined you on these national webinars to talk about opportunities for inviting your networks to support our work. With friends and family fundraisers using our online platform.

Thank you to the 25 applicants and supportive group members who accepted that challenge and created their own fundraisers. It resulted in 300 donations from your friends and family members. Last spring, we challenged our donors to help us raise $350,000 on behalf of our work to support 350 million undernourished children worldwide. A tremendous leadership donation by longtime volunteers Alan and Ellen Newberg brought that goal within reach, and support from many more passionate and committed volunteers allowed us to reach and exceed that hugely ambitious goal.

And most recently, in December, I shared a challenge match opportunity made possible by four of our generous supporters, who committed to matching donations up to $110,000 made before the end of 2024. I am happy and humbled to share today that we- all of YOU- met and exceeded that goal as well!

On behalf of the RESULTS Development team and our entire staff, Thank you! Thank you for being here today, for all of your work, and for investing in change with RESULTS. I am so eager to see what we can accomplish together in the year ahead.

JOANNA DISTEFANO:
Thanks so much, Melissa, and good afternoon, everyone. Itâ€™s so wonderful to see you all here in the New Year! My name is Joanna DiStefano, and I am a Senior Associate on the Grassroots Impact Team, joining our call today from Morgantown, West Virginia. Iâ€™ll wrap todayâ€™s webinar with a few announcements, but first, letâ€™s see how many folks are on the call.

When you see people pop up on your screen, please respond with a number of people in the room with you including yourself. We will give folks just a minute to complete that. Looks good, thanks everyone. Let's cover some of the great opportunities we have this month.

After a brief holiday hiatus, New Advocate Orientations are back beginning on Wednesday, January 15th. You can check out registration information in the link on this slide which was also just posted in the chat.

Also on Wednesday, January 15th, the Motivational Interviewing training series with Dr. David Christian continues. Iâ€™ve been participating in these trainings, and the skills we practice in each session help me feel more confident as an advocate. If you havenâ€™t attended any of the previous sessions, thereâ€™s still time to get on board. I encourage you to do that.

Researching Your Members of Congress is another not-to-be-missed training. This is a two-part training taking place on Thursday, January 23rd and then again one week later on Thursday, January 30th led by the incomparable Allison Gallaher, so be sure to register soon. Especially as you are getting ready for those first 100 days lobby meetings.

Also on Thursday, January 30th, action network managers will gather to brainstorm ways to engage and educate non-group RESULTS members. This is also a good time for interested folks to learn about this leadership opportunity. Thereâ€™s no need to register for this one, just drop in to the afternoon or the evening session. We have other support and partnership calls that we host each month. I wonâ€™t review each one here but do check them out.

Up-to-date information on all of our RESULTS events is always available on our website. You can find our events calendar by navigating the menu at the top of the page or by clicking the link that was just shared in the chat. Remember that you can catch recordings of all of our National Webinars and download presentations from our website on the National Webinars page. Just go to the Volunteers Hub to find the Webinars and Training Resources page. The big circle on the slide.

As we kick off this new Congress, donâ€™t forget to let us know when youâ€™re taking action. Congressional meetings, media publications, outreach events â€“ we have report forms for all of those! And you can find them the Action Center under the Volunteers Hub. As a reminder, RESULTS offices will be closed on Monday, January 20th in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Lastly, we look forward to seeing yâ€™all back here for our next National Webinar on Saturday, February 1st with featured guest Sherrod Brown. That about wraps things up for today. Thanks again for joining us. Weâ€™re looking forward to a momentous year ahead, and weâ€™re so glad youâ€™re here for it. Before we sign off for today, letâ€™s come off mute and give a shout out to all of our friends.

SPEAKER:
Happy new year!

(Multiple Speakers)

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