

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2025

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Department of State,  
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on the Department of State,  
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Schatz:

As you determine priorities for the Fiscal Year 2026 State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, **we strongly urge robust lifesaving funding for the Nutrition account and the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) account, which includes funding for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.**

We appreciate this Committee's long-standing record of supporting life-saving investments in global maternal and child health and nutrition, especially within the first 1000-day window. Adequate funding for the critical MCH and Nutrition accounts is necessary to preserve effective, evidence-based, poverty-focused assistance that saves lives and helps strengthen economies in low- and middle-income countries. Providing smart foreign assistance focusing on the health of moms and babies is in the strategic interest of the United States and makes us safer, stronger, and more prosperous. It decreases the desperation that often drives conflict; gives the US opportunities to win hearts and minds; and stabilizes low- and middle-income countries to serve as better US trading partners. Acts of goodwill through well-designed foreign assistance express our nation's values, and they help create enduring alliances that benefit the U.S.

Since 2000, through sustained investment, under-five child mortality has dropped by 58% and maternal mortality by 42% across USAID's 25 priority countries. While reductions in global mortality rates for women and children are two of the biggest success stories in international development, progress has slowed for more than a decade.

Every year, around 5 million children under the age of five die from mainly preventable and treatable causes, with malnutrition as the underlying factor of roughly half of these deaths. Moreover, nearly 300,000 women die annually of preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, including not having access to birth attendants or after birth support. Additional targeted health investments spur progress against these preventable deaths and continue to build the United States' legacy and leadership in maternal and child health and nutrition.

The MCH account supports delivery of cost-effective, proven services in countries where the burden of maternal and child deaths is the highest. Over the past decade, these programs have helped save more than 6 million lives; since 2012, USAID's lifesaving investments have enabled 67.8 million women to give birth in a health facility, reached 55.4 million newborns with care after delivery, provided 139.5 million treatments to children for diarrhea and pneumonia, and trained 14.2 million health workers in maternal and child health and nutrition. This was done with the bipartisan support of Congress, who regularly increased funding for these programs.

A critical portion of the MCH account supports Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, a public-private partnership that has helped reduce child mortality by half in lower-income countries since 2000 by immunizing an entire generation. Gavi has helped vaccinate more than 1.1 billion children, preventing more than 18.8 million future deaths. Resources for Gavi bolster efforts to continue necessary immunization and deliver vaccines to lower income countries; USAID's technical support is essential to support these efforts and ensure shots get into arms around the world. Notably, Gavi's core routine immunization work has been relatively flat funded for the past six years.

Gavi is preparing to enter its next strategic period from 2026-2030. Increasing support for Gavi at this time is critical, as it continues to serve as a bulwark to American security—preventing and addressing disease outbreaks before they reach our shores. Gavi is also preparing to expand access to new malaria vaccines, which are in incredibly high demand given malaria killed nearly 600,000 people in 2024, mainly young children in Africa. In 2024, with bipartisan support from Congress, the US government pledged \$1.58 billion to Gavi over the next five years. Congress should appropriate no less than \$340 million in FY26 as the first installment of this pledge. Increases to Gavi should not come at the expense of bilateral funding.


The Nutrition account supports nutrition programs for women and children, focusing on the first 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child's second birthday, when interventions have an outsized impact on a child's development. Severely malnourished children are much more likely to have weakened immune systems and are at risk of permanent physical and mental stunting, which prevents them from reaching their full educational, social, and earning potential. In aggregate, malnutrition costs the world \$3.5 trillion in lost productivity and healthcare costs each year.

The Nutrition account supports a targeted set of high-impact interventions that can prevent the worst effects of severe malnutrition, including during conflict. In 2023, USAID reached more than 28 million children and 11 million pregnant women with cost-effective nutrition interventions like breastfeeding support, prenatal vitamins, and vitamin A supplementation. USAID also provides severely malnourished children with therapeutic foods that they need to survive, and in 2023 the Agency reached 2.1 million children across more than 35 countries with this lifesaving treatment.

Increased resources are critical for saving lives and reaching the US Government's goal of ending preventable child and maternal deaths, but most importantly these programs must be prioritized and protected during any reform efforts of USAID. To improve maternal and child health and nutrition, we respectfully urge you protect and increase funding for Maternal and Child Health, including Gavi, and Nutrition in FY26. These resources are some of the most cost-effective interventions we could make, and it saves the lives of moms and babies alike. And again, these limited investments continue to reap benefits and make the U.S. safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the United States maintains its leadership in this global effort to save lives.

Sincerely,



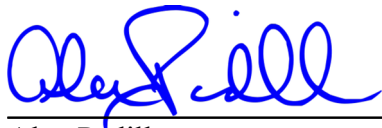
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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



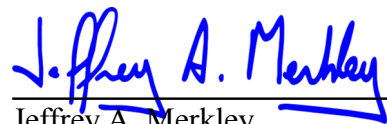
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Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



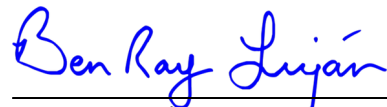
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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



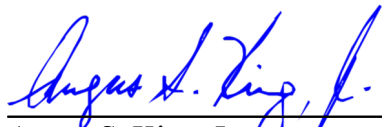
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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



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Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator



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Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

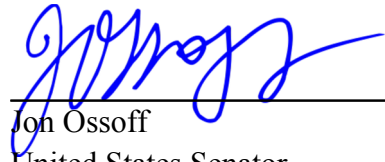


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Andy Kim  
United States Senator




Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



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United States Senator



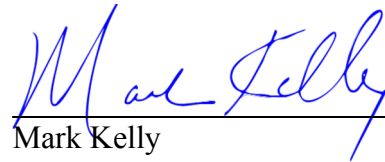
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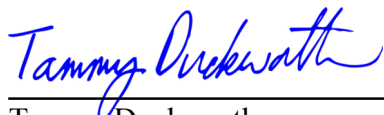
Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



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United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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Elissa Slotkin  
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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator