

# Support Robust Funding for Maternal and Child Health, including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and Nutrition in Global Health

*Please join Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Chris Coons (D-DE) in the call for robust funding for Maternal and Child Health, including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and Nutrition in Global Health in fiscal year 2020. For information, or to sign onto the letter, please contact [Bernadette\\_Roberts@collins.senate.gov](mailto:Bernadette_Roberts@collins.senate.gov) in Senator Collins' office or [Kelsey\\_Magill@coons.senate.gov](mailto:Kelsey_Magill@coons.senate.gov) in Senator Coons' office.*

**\*\*\* Deadline to sign on is April 19, 2019 \*\*\***

April XX, 2019

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,  
and Related Programs  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,  
and Related Programs  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

We appreciate your commitment to preserving effecting, evidence-based, and sustainable foreign assistance that saves lives and creates economic stability and opportunity in developing countries. We recognize your leadership in providing substantial support for Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and nutrition efforts globally, including funding for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

As you begin to consider the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2020, we urge you to maintain robust funding for MCH—including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance—and for Nutrition in Global Health.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) MCH and nutrition programs form the backbone of the U.S. commitment to help end preventable child and maternal deaths globally within a generation. Over the last decade, USAID has helped save the lives of more than 5 million children and 200,000 women. While reductions in global mortality rates for mothers and children are two of the biggest success stories in international development, more than 15,000 children and over 800 women still die each day from preventable causes. Preventable illnesses like diarrhea, malaria, and pneumonia still account for the vast majority of deaths among children under five. Continued U.S. leadership and additional investments are needed to address these gaps and improve health outcomes for women and children globally.

MCH programs support the delivery of low-cost, proven, life-saving services with a focus on 25 priority countries which together account for more than two-thirds of maternal and child deaths

worldwide. USAID's investments help provide access to skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care; training for frontline health workers; clean water, sanitation, and hygiene; life-saving health commodities; and research and development of innovative tools.

USAID investments to address the prevention of all forms of malnutrition emphasize the first 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child's second birthday, which is a critical period for optimal physical and cognitive development. Malnutrition is the underlying cause of 45 percent of preventable child deaths, and these programs make a tremendous impact on a child's ability to learn and eventually secure employment and provide for their families as healthy adults. As a result of malnutrition, almost a quarter of the world's children never reach their full earning, social and economic potential. USAID has found that nutrition investments have one of the highest returns on investment – every \$1 invested in nutrition results in up to \$35 in economic returns.

These accounts also support global polio eradication and measles elimination efforts along with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, an international public-private organization with the goal to make new and underutilized vaccines more affordable and accessible to developing countries. This effort directly supports USAID's goals to end preventable child and maternal deaths and protect communities from infectious diseases.

Funding for maternal and child health and child nutrition is among the most cost-effective, life-saving investments the U.S. can make. Again, we applaud the leadership you have demonstrated on this issue and urge you to continue strong support for these programs in the Fiscal Year 2020 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. We look forward to working with you to help the United States maintain its leadership in this global effort.

Sincerely,

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Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

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Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator