

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 Hannah.Hudson@collins.senate.gov in Senator Collins' office or Parisa.Parsafar@coons.senate.gov in Senator Coons' office.

***** *Deadline to sign on is Monday, March 16, 2020* *****

April XX, 2020

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 leadership and substantial support for life-saving maternal and child health and nutrition interventions globally. As you begin consideration of the Department of State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill for fiscal year (FY) 2021, we strongly urge you to allocate robust funding for the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) account—including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance—and the Nutrition account. This funding is critical to preserving effective, evidence-based, poverty-focused assistance that saves lives and helps strengthen economies in developing countries.

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. While reductions in global mortality rates for mothers and children are two of the biggest success stories in international development, there remain significant gaps that additional investments and continued U.S. leadership can help close.

For example, a growing proportion of under-five deaths occur in the first 28 days after birth, with approximately 7,000 newborns dying each day. While deaths from illnesses such as malaria and HIV have dropped significantly, progress in preventing deaths from pneumonia and diarrhea has been much slower, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Today, there are vaccines to prevent the deadliest cases but pneumonia and diarrheal diseases remain leading killers of children under

five. Finally, recent estimates suggest that more than 300,000 women continue to die annually of preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

To continue progress and address these persistent challenges, MCH programs support the delivery of low-cost, proven, life-saving services in twenty-five priority countries where the burden of preventable deaths is the highest. USAID's generous 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. A critical portion of the MCH account supports global polio eradication efforts along with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which provides new and underutilized vaccines to developing countries.

The Nutrition account supports nutrition-specific programs for women and children, focusing on the first 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child's second birthday. These programs can make a tremendous impact on a child's ability to learn and, later on in life, secure employment and provide for their families as healthy adults. Absent quality nutrition and early intervention health services, a child's physical and cognitive development is at risk of being stunted. Almost a quarter of the world's children never reach their full earning, social, and economic potential because of this. USAID has found that nutrition investments have one of the highest returns—every \$1 invested in nutrition results in up to \$35 in economic returns.

Funding for maternal and child health and nutrition is among the most cost-effective, lifesaving investments the United States can make. Thank you for your leadership on these issues and for your continued support for these and other efforts that contribute to the health and well-being of families in developing countries. We urge your continued strong support for these programs in the FY 2021 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the U.S. maintains its leadership in this global effort.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator