

Support Robust Funding for Global Tuberculosis Programs in FY2019

Please join Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Todd Young (R-IN) in the call for robust funding for global tuberculosis programs for fiscal year 2018. For information, or to sign onto the letter, please contact Abigail Duggan (Abigail_Duggan@brown.senate.gov) in Senator Brown's office or Kevin Marsh (Kevin_Marsh@young.senate.gov) in Senator Young's office.

The closing date for this letter is COB April 24, 2018

April XX, 2018

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
127 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
127 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

Thank you for your continued leadership in supporting State Department programs that are essential to our national security, diplomacy, and humanitarian efforts. We especially appreciate your commitment to bilateral tuberculosis (TB) control as part of the recent omnibus funding bill, and we write to request that you continue to show support for international TB control by providing robust funding for bilateral TB control in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill.

TB is a curable, airborne disease that kills more people worldwide than any other infectious disease. An estimated 10.4 million people fell ill due to TB in 2016, resulting in 1.7 million deaths that year. TB overwhelmingly impacts low- and middle-income countries, which account for 95 percent of annual deaths.

Pregnant women are especially vulnerable to TB – in fact, their chance of developing the disease doubles during pregnancy. Additionally, schools can serve as TB transmission hotspots, with an estimated 1.78 million young people developing TB every year. Failure to invest in TB control also threatens the substantial gains we have made in the fight against HIV/AIDS. TB is the leading killer of people living with HIV/AIDS, and of the 10.4 million people who became ill with tuberculosis in 2016, one-in-ten live with HIV/AIDS.

Drug-resistant TB is becoming more frequent and it is significantly more expensive to treat than drug-sensitive TB. Most drug-resistant TB cases are now caused by direct person-to-person transmission, not by inappropriate treatment, making it considerably easier for drug-resistant TB to spread to new geographic areas. New medications for multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB), along with rapid diagnostics, are enabling faster progress against the disease. But these new technologies are still underutilized, and US assistance is vital to speeding adoption of new approaches.

The global fight against TB has scored impressive successes – an estimated 53 million lives have been saved from 2000-2016, showing an enormous return on investment. USAID’s TB program centers on building the capacity to end TB. In the 23 priority countries, new cases have fallen by 20 percent since 2000 – more than twice as quickly as countries that do not receive U.S. bilateral TB assistance. Robust funding in FY19 would build on the success of the previous Administration’s 2015 National Action Plan to Combat MDR-TB, and would help stem the spread of this killer disease both domestically and globally.

With robust funding, USAID could boldly accelerate progress, ensuring expanded TB access. This would also dramatically boost TB prevention, as once a patient is on effective treatment, the disease rapidly becomes non-infectious. This funding would also speed up the development and implementation of shorter, less toxic treatments, which would facilitate patient adherence to treatment regimens, reduce program costs, and mitigate the growing threat of drug-resistant TB.

In addition, the United States’ contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (the Global Fund) is a crucial way to leverage more resources to combat TB and MDR-TB. Investments from USAID and the Global Fund are interdependent, with USAID providing crucial technical assistance to Global Fund grants. The Global Fund is the largest provider of international donor funding for the fight against TB, providing more than 65 percent of financing for TB programs worldwide and more than tripling MDR-TB funding over the last 6 years. To date, the Global Fund partnership has tested and treated 17.4 million people for TB and increased the number of people treated for MDR-TB by 50 percent since 2005. We request that the U.S. contribution to the Global Fund be sustained in FY19 in order to meet the full pledge of \$4.3 billion from 2017-2019.

We acknowledge the difficulty you face in determining the best allocation of precious foreign assistance dollars. We thank you for your consistent support of USAID’s TB control program and the Global Fund, and urge you to make combating TB a top priority for your FY19 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

Todd Young
U.S. Senator

U.S. Senator

U.S. Senator