

Please Join Senators Brown and Young in Calling for Bold U.S. Leadership at the UN High Level Meeting on TB

Deadline: September 7, 2023

Please join Senators Brown (D-OH) and Young (R-IN) in calling on the Biden Administration to demonstrate bold U.S. leadership in the fight against tuberculosis (TB) at the UN High Level Meeting (HLM) on TB in September. You can sign on by contacting [Emily Pellegrino@brown.senate.gov](mailto:Emily_Pellegrino@brown.senate.gov) (Brown) or john_pinegar@young.senate.gov (Young).

Dear President Biden:

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) will hold its second High-Level Meeting (HLM) on tuberculosis (TB) this September during the 78th session of the UNGA in New York. We urge you to use this opportunity to continue U.S. leadership in the global fight against TB by building support among other global leaders to ensure the final declaration includes ambitious, clearly defined, and measurable targets to track progress against TB eradication at both a national and global level. We also hope to see the U.S. make a bold new commitment of its own to help reach these targets, and to encourage other countries to do the same.

TB remains a serious public health crisis. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, TB is on track to remain the world's leading infectious killer. Despite the fact that the disease is largely curable, preventable, and treatable, an estimated 10.6 million people fell ill and 1.6 million people died of TB in 2021.¹ TB is responsible for one in three deaths from anti-microbial resistance and is the leading killer of people with HIV. Before the pandemic, TB caused more fatalities each year than HIV/AIDS and malaria combined. Without strong global commitments and implementation efforts to address TB, the Stop TB Partnership warn that there could be an additional 6.6 million TB related deaths and cost the global economy \$1 trillion.²

The first UN High Level meeting on TB in 2018 marked a turning point in the international response to TB. World leaders set measurable goals to address the spread of the disease, agreed upon robust levels of funding necessary to make progress in our global fight against the disease, and executed policy changes essential to eradication. Not only did these efforts help our global fight against TB, but they were also essential in preparing our world for another public health crisis: COVID-19. As the pandemic began to take its toll, U.S.-supported global TB programs provided crucial support to the COVID-19 response in many nations.

Many of the resources that have been essential in our global fight against TB were successfully utilized by frontline health workers and epidemiologists to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Unfortunately, the world's shift in focus towards the COVID-19 pandemic slowed our progress on the TB response. Deaths and new cases of TB spiked throughout the pandemic as lockdowns

¹ https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/hq-tuberculosis/global-tuberculosis-report-2022/global-tb-report-2022-factsheet.pdf?sfvrsn=88f8d76_8&download=true

² <https://www.stoptb.org/global-plan-to-end-tb/global-plan-to-end-tb-2023-2030>

increased, and staff and equipment normally utilized to address TB were diverted to fight COVID-19. The continued prevalence of and morbidity associated with TB demand a renewed commitment and enhanced investments, in addition to efforts to establish and strengthen global partnerships dedicated to pandemic preparedness.

International cooperation is essential to an effective global response to TB, and the U.S. must continue our diplomatic efforts to bring more partners and resources into the fold to fight this disease. Cooperation between USAID, the Department of State, programs within the Department of Health and Human Services, and leaders around the world will be crucial for encouraging countries struggling with TB to propose their own national action plans. As a leader on TB, the U.S. should not just pledge its support for these plans, but also encourage further investments from donor nations to support these initiatives. The UNGA HLM presents the perfect opportunity to recommit to our shared goals of reducing the prevalence of TB and prioritizing bold, new commitments to strengthen the global infrastructure and resources necessary to eradicate this infectious killer.

As the U.S. and other U.N. Member States prepare to start negotiating the political declaration of for the high-level meeting on TB, we urge you to push for a declaration that includes ambitious goals paired with clearly defined, measurable targets so that every country involved in the struggle against TB can confirm that real progress is being made at both a domestic and global level. We urge administration officials representing the U.S. at the UNGA HLM on TB to prioritize the five following targets: (1) a measurable goal to reach everyone sick with TB with quality testing and treatment; (2) specific, bold new financial commitments to close the global funding gap; (3) priority for a human rights and a person-centered approach to the pandemic; (4) faster development and broad access to new tools, including diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines; and (5) commitment to ongoing high-level accountability against the declaration's specific targets.

It is in the interest of the U.S. and our allies that this high-level meeting succeeds. The U.S. has led the way in the fight against TB with consistent investment in the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, as well as sustained bilateral commitments. Continued investments in and commitments by U.S. leadership at the HLM in September, resulting in the strongest possible final declaration, will not just build on the progress made at the 2018 HLM, but accelerate our efforts to eradicate TB – both nationally and globally. We stand ready to work with you to continue the fight to defeat TB.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress

Todd Young
Member of Congress