



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2021

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Acting Director Young:

Over a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, with an unprecedented immunization campaign well underway in our own country, members of Congress are closely monitoring US leadership of global response and recovery efforts. We note the inclusion of significant funding for global health activities in the *American Rescue Plan Act* (ARPA) passed in March. As champions for global health innovation—having recently co-founded a new Bipartisan Global Health Research and Development Congressional Working Group to convene colleagues to champion policies to strengthen US support of global health R&D—we write to urge the Administration to expediently devote a portion of these funds to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), and to devote greater resources to urgent innovation activities within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Global Health Bureau.

We urge the Administration to commit the full \$300 million in emergency funding requested by CEPI for the immediate phase of their COVID-19 response. CEPI is a global co-funded effort to develop vaccines for emerging infectious diseases now working to advance eight COVID-19 vaccines from early-stage development through manufacturing and approval. By investing in CEPI, the US government can leverage funding from other global patrons to support promising vaccine candidates designed with global access in mind while not bearing the full cost of development.

The historic US investments in diagnostic, therapeutic, and vaccine development for COVID-19 must not be undercut by the rise of virus variants and rapid spread of the pandemic in many countries. As the leader in global health assistance, the United States has the opportunity to make forward-thinking commitments to curb COVID-19 worldwide, ultimately ensuring that our progress is sustainable and lasting. Previously announced commitments to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria are important and laudable steps towards that goal—as is the funding in ARPA dedicated to COVID-19 relief via PEPFAR, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. However, key innovation gaps remain, particularly among patients and health workers in low-resource settings.

Many of the first-to-market COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, and other health products developed and delivered in high-resource settings over the past year are difficult to deploy in the world's poorest places, where barriers like lack of reliable electricity and health infrastructure necessitate different types of tools. Thankfully, USAID has decades of experience in health innovation, including during emergencies and novel disease outbreaks. In previous global health crises like the West African Ebola epidemic and the Zika epidemic, USAID helped crowdsource and bring to market innovative tools to fight these threats via its Grand Challenges programs. We understand that the agency issued a request for information for proposals for low-cost, scalable innovations to support the international COVID-19 response over a year ago but has not had a source of emergency funding to advance them. We urge the Administration to direct a portion of funding for global health activities at USAID included in ARPA towards innovation activities, such as the launch of a Grand Challenge for COVID-19 and Global Health Security. We believe additional resources are needed for the most pressing innovation gaps, particularly in the areas of diagnostic development and scale-up and innovations to advance and adapt oxygen therapies in low-resource settings.

Innovation is our exit strategy from COVID-19. We must act now to advance COVID-19 tools tailored for global access and impact. Committing some emergency global health funding from ARPA to CEPI and innovation activities at USAID is a critical step towards ending the pandemic.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress

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