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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

May 18, 2018

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

Recent events remind us that global health security must remain a national security priority. The ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has caused 23 deaths and 44 cases since April 2018. This is DRC's ninth Ebola outbreak, but thanks to strategic investments in public health infrastructure – by the United States and other global partners – the DRC is better equipped to respond to this outbreak. However, as we learned with the 2014 Ebola outbreak, diseases can quickly cross borders and become epidemics of international concern. In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) has noted that the proximity of the currently-affected area to other countries and urban centers increases the risk of spreading Ebola.¹ Global health security requires adequate coordination led by the White House as well as committed, long-term funding and resources. When faced with a threat as deadly as Ebola, we cannot afford to walk back our ability to prepare for pandemic diseases. Accordingly, I urge you to act quickly to designate senior-level National Security Council (NSC) personnel to focus on global health security while maintaining funding for critical global health security initiatives.

National Security Council: I am concerned by Rear Admiral Timothy Ziemer's departure from the NSC, elimination of his global health security office, and reassignment of the office's team members.² Global health security is a national security priority. Maintaining the NSC's global health security office is key to this prioritization. There needs to be one person at the NSC, with the backing of a capable team, who can coordinate across agencies to ensure that we have the resources necessary to guard against and respond to any outbreak that threatens the United States.

Funding for global health programs: The Administration's proposed budget cuts threaten our ability to respond to a public health emergency. The Global Health Security Agenda (GHTA) is a global partnership that strengthens our ability to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats. Funding for this important initiative is set to expire in 2019. Reports indicate that a lack of resources will force the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to narrow its GHTA activities from 49 countries to 10 countries – a

¹ World Health Organization, "Ebola virus disease – Democratic Republic of the Congo." May 17, 2018. <http://www.who.int/csr/don/17-may-2018-ebola-drc/en/>

² Lauren Webber, "Sudden Departure of White House Global Health Security Head Has Experts Worried." *Huffington Post*, May 09, 2018. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tim-ziemer-global-health-security-leaves_us_5af37dfbe4b0859d11d02290

cut of 80 percent.³ DRC, home of the aforementioned Ebola outbreak, is one of the countries where activities will be scaled back, putting Americans at home and abroad at greater risk of Ebola.

Ebola funding rescissions: The Administration's recent rescissions proposal contains a \$252 million cut to Fiscal Year 2015 emergency funding appropriated for the Ebola response. The Office of Management and Budget proposal states, "These funds remain from the initial outbreak in 2015 and are no longer needed because the Ebola response has largely concluded. Enacting the rescission would therefore not impact the Ebola response."⁴ Rescinding this money now is penny wise and pound foolish.

As evidenced by the recent outbreak in the DRC and the comments of health experts, these funds are still needed.⁵ According to an analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation, \$3.74 billion of the total \$5.4 billion in Ebola funding was set aside for international response and the rest was designated for research and development, capacity-building, and domestic response.⁶ These are ongoing activities and the expenditure periods for many programs are ongoing: The importance of such strategic long-term investments cannot be understated. With these investments, the United States government safeguards our nation's health and security at home while saving taxpayer dollars in the long term. Now is not the time to cut these funds.

In our globalized world, where diseases are never more than a plane ride away, we must do all we can to prepare for the next, inevitable outbreak and keep Americans safe from disease. I urge you to act swiftly in reaffirming your commitment to global health security by taking immediate action to designate senior-level NSC personnel to focus on global health security, supporting adequate and appropriate funding for global health security initiatives, and leading the way in preparing for the next pandemic threat.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

CC: John Bolton, National Security Advisor of the United States

³ Lena H. Sun, "CDC to cut by 80 percent efforts to prevent global disease outbreak." *The Washington Post*, February 1, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2018/02/01/cdc-to-cut-by-80-percent-efforts-to-prevent-global-disease-outbreak/>

⁴ Office of Management and Budget, Proposed Recession of Budget Authority. May 8, 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/POTUS-Rescission-Transmittal-Package-5.8.2018.pdf>

⁵ Infectious Diseases Society of America, HIV Medicine Association, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society, and Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, "Rescission Package Short Changes Global, American Health Security." May 10, 2018. http://www.idsociety.org/Rescission_Package_Short_Changes_Global_2C_American_Health_Security.aspx

⁶ Kaiser Family Foundation, "The U.S. Response to Ebola: Status of the FY2015 Emergency Ebola Appropriation." December 11, 2015. <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/the-u-s-response-to-ebola-status-of-the-fy2015-emergency-ebola-appropriation/>