

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State and
Foreign Operations
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State and
Foreign Operations
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lee and Ranking Member Rogers,

As you begin to consider appropriations for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we write to request your support for strong funding levels for family planning and reproductive health. In particular, recognizing the critical increases in funding and efforts to ensure those resources can flow to qualified providers in the FY2020 and FY2021 House-passed bills, we respectfully request that international family planning and reproductive health programs be funded at no less than \$1.039 billion, including \$70 million for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and be free from policy restrictions, like the global gag rule. This additional incremental increase in funding in the FY2022 bill and beyond would expand access to services that help women, girls and families survive and thrive and are important steps toward meeting the estimated \$1.74 billion U.S. share of the global need for these critical programs. Our investments in these programs save lives, support our broader global health, development, and foreign policy priorities, and are ultimately cost-effective.

As you know, funding for international affairs makes up less than one percent of the federal budget. Investments in development and diplomacy – including support for humanitarian programs, democracy and governance, disaster assistance, and global health – are the foundation for building a more peaceful, prosperous, and healthy world. The global COVID-19 pandemic has strained even the most advanced health systems across the world, and no country has been immune to disruptions in access to health care in the past year. In addition to the recent supplemental funding for global response included in the American Rescue Plan, we must continue to invest in the long-standing programs that have served communities around the world for decades in order to not lose momentum as we fight this pandemic and long-standing health challenges.

Bilateral Family Planning

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) leadership is critical to ensure countries meet the family planning and reproductive health needs of their people. Our nation's investments in international family planning have had a significant sustained impact in recent years. The funding appropriated for the U.S. assistance for international family planning and reproductive health programs and UNFPA in FY 2020 made it possible for:

- 27.4 million women and couples to receive contraceptive services;
- 12.2 million unintended pregnancies to be averted;
- 4.1 million unsafe abortions to be averted ; and
- 20,000 maternal deaths to be averted.

These investments not only save and improve lives but are also highly cost-effective. For every additional dollar invested in contraceptive services, \$3.00 would be saved in pregnancy related care.

An estimated 218 million women in developing countries want to prevent or delay pregnancy but face significant barriers to using modern contraceptive methods. Family planning and reproductive health programs are key interventions which contribute to our shared global health, development and foreign policy goals, including prioritizing women and girls, advancing gender equality, reducing infant and maternal mortality, preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and combating gender-based violence. Additionally, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other crises, highlight the importance of all women being able to access contraception and other essential sexual, reproductive and maternal health services along with programs to reduce and respond to gender-based violence. As such, we recommend that that international family planning and reproductive health programs be funded at no less than \$1.039 billion.

Prioritizing UNFPA Funding

After four years of being ineligible to receive funding due to a politically motivated decision by the previous administration, funding is able to flow to UNFPA once again. The agency plays a critical role in helping the U.S. achieve its global health and gender equality goals as the largest multilateral provider of family planning and reproductive health services, working in more than 155 countries, often where USAID does not operate family planning or reproductive health programs. The agency also plays a critical role in combating maternal mortality and morbidity, obstetric fistula, female genital mutilation, gender-based violence, and HIV/AIDS. In humanitarian crises and conflict affected areas, UNFPA has taken a leading role in responding to reproductive and community health needs. For example, UNFPA is the sole provider of lifesaving reproductive health supplies and medicines in Yemen. They are also playing an

essential role in the COVID-19 pandemic response providing contraception, personal protective equipment (PPE), lifesaving maternal health medicines and helping health systems contact trace and maintain essential maternal and perinatal care. We recommend that the House demonstrate support for this work by providing UNFPA with at least \$70 million.

Permanent Repeal of the Global Gag Rule

Both adequate funding and evidence-based policies that support sexual and reproductive health and rights are critical to ensuring successful global health programs. We welcome the Biden-Harris Administration's January 28th presidential memorandum rescinding the global gag rule. This policy threatens to undermine the effectiveness of these critical programs by excluding some of the most capable health organizations which have the infrastructure, expertise and community trust in areas we must reach in order to achieve our global health goals. Additionally, the policy blocks health care access, stifles local advocacy efforts, hinders reproductive rights and puts lifesaving services out of reach for communities who already face systematic barriers to care worldwide. This policy creates fear and confusion and puts lifesaving services out of reach for communities who already face systematic barriers to care. We strongly support efforts to permanently end the global gag rule in order to build back sustainable global health partnerships, accelerate progress, and ensure that a future administration cannot reinstate this harmful policy.

For the health of women and girls around the world, we firmly support international family planning and reproductive health programs and urge you to provide this level of funding and take action to end policies that undermine its effectiveness and subvert its goals in the FY 2022 Appropriations Bill.

We appreciate your consideration and thank you for your ongoing leadership.

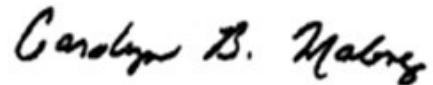
Sincerely,



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Ami Bera
Member of Congress



Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Member of Congress

/s/
A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

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Alan Lowenthal
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D
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Ann McLane Kuster
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