Support FY22 Funding for Polio Eradication

Please join us in sending two programmatic request letters to the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee, as well as the State, Foreign Operations Subcommittee, in support of funding in Fiscal Year 2022 for the polio eradication activities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), a partnership led by Rotary International, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is one of the largest, most successful public-private health initiatives ever created. Since the launch of the GPEI in 1988, nearly three billion children have been immunized, over 18 million have been spared disability and over 900,000 polio-related deaths have been prevented. In addition, more than 1.5 million childhood deaths have been averted, thanks to the systematic administration of Vitamin A during polio campaigns. The cumulative result of these efforts is that the number of people afflicted with polio has declined by more than 99.9 percent and two of the three types of wild polio virus have been stopped, showing clearly that eradication is possible.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of millions of health workers, many of whom operate in difficult or dangerous conditions, progress toward global polio eradication continued in 2020, even within the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Africa region was certified as being wild polio-free in August 2020 after more than three years of no reported cases of wild polio virus. Only two countries remain that have not yet stopped transmission of wild polio, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Health workers and volunteers in these and other countries at-risk for outbreaks continue to immunize over 400 million children annually. These workers are protecting children from polio, paving the way for other health programs to reach the world’s most vulnerable children and playing a vital role in detecting and responding to other infectious diseases including COVID-19.

Polio eradication infrastructure in over 50 countries has been used to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic including surveillance, contact tracing, and community education. This will likely continue as the COVID vaccine is rolled out globally. The GPEI is also working to reach millions of children who have not received their polio vaccinations because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We know only too well that viruses do not respect borders. Until the world is polio-free, all children, even those in the United States, are at risk. The tremendous progress made against polio would not have been possible without the financial and political commitment of the United States, which is the leading public sector donor to the GPEI. Continued leadership is essential to protecting the progress we have made and ensuring we capitalize on the historic opportunity to rid the world of polio once and for all.

If you have any questions regarding this request or would like to sign the letters, please contact Craig Dulniak in Congressman Steve Cohen’s Office at Craig.Dulniak@mail.house.gov or Drew Kennedy in Congressman Joe Wilson’s office at Drew.Kennedy@mail.house.gov.
Sincerely,

Steve Cohen and Joe Wilson

Members of Congress

House Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee Letter

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Tom Cole
House Appropriation Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

Thank you for your ongoing support of funding for polio eradication through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Global Immunization Program. We are writing to request that you continue providing at least level funding of $176 million for this program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill.

This funding will enable CDC to continue its global leadership in supporting high-quality immunization campaigns and polio surveillance, supporting targeted, evidence-based innovations to overcome barriers and strengthening in-country capacity in order to interrupt polio transmission globally. The GPEI is one of the largest, most successful, public-private health initiatives ever created. As a result of this global effort, nearly three billion children have been immunized, 18 million have been spared disability, and over 900,000 polio-related deaths have been averted. In addition, more than 1.5 million childhood deaths have been prevented, thanks to the systematic administration of Vitamin A during polio campaigns.

Global polio incidence has been reduced by more than 99 percent. However, until the world is polio-free, all children, even those in the United States, remain at risk. Only two countries remain that have not yet stopped transmission of wild polio: Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Africa region was certified as being wild polio-free in August 2020 after Nigeria, the last polio endemic country in Africa, marked more than three years without a case of wild polio. We must now complete polio eradication while the end is in sight. Failing to do so could result in a global resurgence which could see as many as 200,000 annual cases within a decade.

Similar to smallpox eradication, polio eradication is a cost-effective public health investment, as its benefits continue to accrue over time. The physical and human assets developed to eradicate polio have contributed to stronger overall immunization and health systems and have increased global capacity to respond quickly to public health threats such as Ebola, Zika and now COVID-19. Polio-funded staff and assets have contributed to the COVID-19 response in more than 50 countries. This includes utilizing the global polio surveillance network to detect COVID-19 cases, increasing lab testing capacity for COVID-19, and streamlining data management and information-sharing. In
addition, thousands of GPEI-supported health workers have provided community education about COVID-19, assisted with contract tracing, and trained new health workers in the fight against the pandemic. The infrastructure, innovations, and knowledge used to eradicate polio will continue to support global health security and benefit global public health long after polio has been eradicated.

Continued U.S. leadership is essential to ensuring we capitalize on the historic opportunity to rid the world of polio once and for all. To continue this tremendous progress, we respectfully request your continued support for the polio eradication efforts of the CDC in the FY2022 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

House Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Letter

Chairwoman Barbara Lee   Ranking Member Hal Rogers
Committee on Appropriations   Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations   State, Foreign Operations
HT-2, The Capitol   1016 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515
DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lee and Ranking Member Rogers:

Thank you for your ongoing support of funding for the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Polio Eradication Initiative. We are writing to request that you continue providing at least level funding of $65 million for this program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill.

This funding will enable USAID to continue its global leadership in supporting high-quality immunization campaigns and polio surveillance, supporting targeted, evidence-based innovations to overcome barriers and strengthening in-country capacity in order to interrupt polio transmission globally. The polio eradication initiative is one of the largest, most successful, public-private health initiatives ever created. As a result of this global effort, nearly three billion children have been immunized, 18 million have been spared disability, and over 900,000 polio-related deaths have been averted. In addition, more than 1.5 million childhood deaths have been prevented, thanks to the systematic administration of Vitamin A during polio campaigns.

Global polio incidence has been reduced by more than 99 percent. However, until the world is polio-free, all children, even those in the United States, remain at risk. Only two countries remain that have not yet stopped transmission of wild polio: Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Africa region was certified as being wild polio-free in August 2020 after Nigeria, the last polio endemic country in Africa, marked three years without a case of wild polio in 2019. We must now complete polio eradication while the end is in sight. Failing to do so could result in a potential global polio resurgence which could see as many as 200,000 annual cases of within a decade.
Similar to smallpox eradication, polio eradication is a cost-effective public health investment, as its benefits continue to accrue over time. The physical and human assets developed to eradicate polio have contributed to stronger overall immunization and health systems and have increased global capacity to respond to public health threats such as Ebola, Zika, and now COVID-19. Polio-funded staff and assets have contributed to the COVID-19 response in more than 50 countries. This includes utilizing the global polio surveillance network to detect COVID-19 cases, increasing lab testing capacity for COVID-19, and streamlining data management and information-sharing. In addition, thousands of GPEI-supported health workers have provided community education about COVID-19, assisted with contract tracing, and trained new health workers in the fight against the pandemic. The infrastructure, innovations, and knowledge used to eradicate polio will continue to support global health security and benefit global public health long after polio has been eradicated.

Continued U.S. leadership is essential to ensuring we capitalize on the historic opportunity to rid the world of polio once and for all. To continue this tremendous progress, we respectfully request your continued support for the polio eradication efforts of the USAID in the FY2022 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,