

Support FY25 Funding for Polio Eradication

Please join us in sending two programmatic request letters to the House Appropriations Committee's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee and State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee in support of Fiscal Year 2025 funding for 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) is one of the largest, most successful public-private health initiatives ever created. Since GPEI's launch in 1988, nearly three billion children have been immunized, saving over 900,000 from polio-related deaths and 20 million from disability. Additionally, more than 1.5 million childhood deaths have been averted thanks to the systematic administration of Vitamin A during this campaign. 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.

These results show that the eradication of polio is within reach. Endemic poliovirus transmission continues to be very restricted and was 60% lower in 2023 than the previous year. Twelve cases were confirmed in 2023 in the endemic countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan (six in each). Outbreaks of variant poliovirus exacerbated by setbacks in routine immunization following the Covid-19 pandemic were also reduced. There were 30% fewer cases located in fewer geographic areas in 2023 as compared to 2022.

Investment in global polio eradication brings a number of related benefits, such as strengthening countries' health systems, establishing vital public-health tools, enhancing infrastructure, and training skilled health workers in the developing world. Polio eradication staff have served as "first responders," providing vital support to fight other disease outbreaks, including Ebola and COVID-19.

The 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 and has contributed \$4.5 billion to bring us to the threshold of a polio-free world. This commitment has also leveraged hundreds of millions of dollars in funding from other countries that support the cause.

This progress cannot be taken for granted. As we were reminded in 2022, this disease can still threaten Americans within our own country. That year we witnessed the first case of paralytic polio in the United States in decades and also detected the polio virus in wastewater in several counties in the state of New York, as well as in the United Kingdom and Canada. These virus detections are a stark reminder that until the world is polio free, all children, even those in the United States, are at risk. Continued U.S. leadership is essential to protect the progress we have made and ensure we capitalize on this historic opportunity to eradicate polio.

If you have any questions regarding this request or would like to sign the letters, please contact Rachel Citron (rachel.citron@mail.house.gov) in Congressman Steve Cohen's Office or Michael MacHarg (michael.macharg@mail.house.gov) in Congressman Joe Wilson's office.

Sincerely,

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

House Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee Letter

Chairman Robert Aderholt
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

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 provide **at least \$276 million for this program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.**

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (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, 20 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.

Since the program's launch in 1988, global polio incidence has been reduced by more than 99 percent. However, outbreaks of variant poliovirus which have increased following the COVID-19 health service disruptions pose an ongoing challenge to under-immunized communities. There were 30% fewer such cases in fewer places in 2023 as compared to 2022 and efforts continue to stop these outbreaks.

This increased funding in FY 2025 will allow the CDC to intensify its global leadership in support of GPEI's *Polio Eradication Strategy 2022-2026*. The strategy lays out two achievable goals: to permanently interrupt all polio virus transmission in endemic countries and to stop circulating variant poliovirus transmission to prevent outbreaks in non-endemic countries. Increased funding would enable the CDC to enhance and expand surge staffing and management capacity in endemic, outbreak and at-risk countries to ensure high-quality immunization campaigns, support procurement and delivery of vaccines including the novel oral polio vaccine (nOPV) to prevent and respond to outbreaks of variant poliovirus. The requested funding would also strengthen polio surveillance and establish direct detection capacities, as well as strengthen in-country capacity through the use of digitization and evidence-based innovations to overcome immunization barriers.

The first confirmed case of paralytic polio in the United States in decades and detections of polio virus in wastewater in several counties in New York, as well as in the United Kingdom and Canada in 2022 were stark reminders that until the world is polio free, all children, even those in the United States, will be at risk.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are now the only two countries that have not yet stopped transmission of wild polio. Just twelve cases were confirmed in 2023 in these endemic countries (six in each). Africa was certified as being wild polio-free in August 2020 and has maintained that status, despite an importation of wild poliovirus from Pakistan in 2022. However, outbreaks of variant poliovirus, which have increased following the COVID-19 health service disruptions, pose an ongoing challenge to under-immunized communities. There were 30% fewer such cases located in fewer geographic areas in 2023 as compared to 2022 and GPEI is leading efforts to stop these outbreaks. The time is now to surge resources to complete polio eradication once and for all.

Similar to smallpox eradication, polio eradication is a cost-effective public health investment. The physical and human assets developed for polio have bolstered other immunization programs and health systems, improving global and local capacity to respond quickly to public health threats like Ebola, Zika, and most recently COVID-19. These broad benefits demonstrate the enduring value of our investments in the GPEI.

Continued U.S. leadership is essential to ensuring we capitalize on this historic opportunity to rid the world of polio. To continue this tremendous progress, we respectfully request your support for the polio eradication efforts of the CDC in the FY 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

House Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Letter

Chairman Mario Diaz-Balart
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
HT-2, The Capitol
DC 20515

Ranking Member Barbara Lee
Committee on Appropriations
State, Foreign Operations
1016 Longworth House Office Building Washington,
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Lee:

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 provide **at least \$165 million for this program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill.**

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (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, 20 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.

This increased funding in FY 2025 will allow USAID to intensify its global leadership in support of GPEI's *Polio Eradication Strategy 2022-2026*. The strategy lays out two achievable goals: to permanently interrupt all polio virus transmission in endemic countries and to stop circulating variant poliovirus transmission to prevent outbreaks in non-endemic countries. Increased funding would enable USAID to improve national and subnational capacity for monitoring poliovirus transmission by expanding environmental surveillance and increasing the number of surveillance medical officers and community-based surveillance officers. It would also support high-quality immunization and outbreak response campaigns in high-risk and remote areas through targeted, evidence-based innovations to overcome barriers, build community demand for vaccination, and strengthen in-country capacity to interrupt all forms of poliovirus transmission globally.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are now the only two countries that have not yet stopped transmission of wild polio. Just twelve cases were confirmed in 2023 in these endemic countries (six in each). Africa was certified as being wild polio-free in August 2020 and has maintained that status, despite an importation of wild poliovirus from Pakistan in 2022. However, outbreaks of variant poliovirus, which have increased following the COVID-19 health service disruptions, pose an ongoing challenge to under-immunized communities. There were 30% fewer such cases located in fewer geographic areas in 2023 as compared to 2022 and GPEI is leading efforts to stop these outbreaks. The time is now to surge resources to complete polio eradication once and for all.

Similar to smallpox eradication, polio eradication is a cost-effective public health investment. The physical and human assets developed for polio have bolstered other immunization programs and health systems, improving global and local capacity to respond quickly to public health threats like Ebola, Zika, and most recently COVID-19. These broad benefits demonstrate the enduring value of our investments in the GPEI.

Continued U.S. leadership is essential to ensuring we capitalize on this historic opportunity to rid the world of polio. To continue this tremendous progress, we respectfully request your support for the polio eradication efforts of USAID in the FY 2025 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,