

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

April 16, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

I write to express my serious concerns about your recent decision to unilaterally halt the United States' funding for the World Health Organization (WHO). Cutting off funding at this critical time in the pandemic will seriously damage global efforts to contain COVID-19.

The United States is the largest donor nation to the WHO – U.S. contributions represent nearly 15 percent of the WHO's available funding.¹ Withholding this funding will recklessly destabilize the international response to COVID-19, and undermine ongoing response efforts for other major health threats.

The WHO is leading several essential elements of the global response to this pandemic, including direct support for responses in low- and middle-income countries. As long as COVID-19 is surging in any country, it is a threat to every country, including the United States. Any success we have in containing the disease domestically will not last if other nations are unable to do the same. Diseases are not stopped by borders, and they are stopped by robust public health efforts like those supported by the WHO. That is why the WHO is not only critical to respond to the disease worldwide, but to protect families here in the U.S. as well.

The WHO is critical to developing a vaccine as quickly as possible as well. It has convened clinical trial specialists, regulators, and funders and has an innovative trial proposal to rapidly study vaccines.² Defunding their efforts could hinder our ability to develop an effective vaccine, contributing to countless preventable illnesses and deaths, costing Americans trillions of dollars, and further extending this crisis.

Finally, I am deeply concerned about what your decision means for the future of U.S. leadership on global health. Providing funding is a key lever the United States has to hold the WHO accountable and drive improvements in its operations that protect the health of people in every country. Withdrawing funding puts at risk major advances toward polio eradication, combatting tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and bolstering global access to essential health and nutrition services. We cannot fight a global pandemic by reverting to harmful rhetoric and actions that undermine public health at home and abroad like your Administration has done; instead, we should be bolstering international collaboration to beat COVID-19.

¹ <https://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/funding/assessed-contributions/en/>

² <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/13-04-2020-public-statement-for-collaboration-on-covid-19-vaccine-development>

I implore you to reverse this reckless decision and maintain the United States' funding commitment to the WHO.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patty Murray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Patty Murray
United States Senator