



September 11, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

The undersigned cancer organizations, representing patients, cancer care providers, researchers, and caregivers, are writing to urge you to continue to fund and support the World Health Organization (WHO). Our organizations work throughout the United States and the world to provide cancer patients with high-quality cancer care, to provide patient access to clinical trials, to reduce the financial burden of cancer, and to support patients throughout their care.

We support the WHO's commitment to excellence in international health and their adherence to the United Nations' values of integrity, professionalism and respect for diversity. Though the WHO works to improve standards of health and access to treatment in a variety of non-communicable and infectious diseases, we are writing specifically in support of their efforts in the prevention and management of cancer.

In 2018, the global cancer burden rose to 18.1 million new cases and 9.6 million cancer deaths,ⁱ making cancer the second-leading cause of death worldwide. Moreover, the burden of cancer in low and mid-resource countries is significant and growing, accounting for approximately 75% of all cancer deaths worldwide.ⁱⁱ It is our hope that our organizations, in conjunction with the efforts of the WHO, will continue to work on reducing these numbers significantly in the coming years. However, this collective goal will not be possible without the United States' continued commitment to and support of the WHO.

Adequate funding is essential to reduce the global cancer burden. Therefore, it is vital that the United States Senate include specific funding for the WHO assessed and voluntary contributions in future appropriations packages. The United States is the largest government contributor to the WHO. The United States, through both assessed and voluntary contributions, provided nearly one fifth of the WHO's total program budget for the 2018-2019 biennium.ⁱⁱⁱ

In addition to assessed contributions, the United States designates funding—in the form of specified voluntary contributions—to support specific programs that work to reduce the global cancer burden. This includes programs that increase access to essential health and nutrition services, programs that work to eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases, and programs that establish effective coordination and operations support.

The House of Representatives, in H.R. 7608, provided funding for both assessed and voluntary contributions to the WHO. Additionally, H.R. 7608 specifies that “not less than \$200,000,000 shall be available for grants or contributions to the WHO.”^{iv} Our organizations urge the Senate to appropriate funding specifically to support assessed and voluntary contributions to the WHO.

Membership benefits researchers working within the United States by providing access to the WHO global health communication channels. To continue the rapid progress of cancer research in the United States, it is essential that researchers have access to information provided by the WHO. The exchange of information directly benefits cancer patients both domestically and internationally. Additionally, the WHO supports cancer specific initiatives benefitting individuals with or at risk for cancer in the US and globally.

The Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer's goal is to achieve at least a 60% survival rate for children with cancer by 2030, saving an additional 1,000,000 lives. Acute leukemia is one of the most common blood cancers in children and one of six areas of focus in this initiative. To support the goals of the Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer properly, the United States Senate must appropriate funds to the WHO. The United States should work with the WHO on this important initiative to improve early diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care for children with cancer around the world.

In addition to working to reduce the prevalence of childhood cancer, the WHO is working tirelessly to address the global burden of cervical cancer, a mostly preventable disease when effective primary (HPV vaccination) and secondary prevention approaches (screening for, and treating precancerous lesions) are implemented. The WHO's Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative provides resources to governments, patients, and physicians for solutions to prevent and treat cervical cancer. In August 2020, the World Health Assembly adopted a global strategy to accelerate cervical cancer elimination through vaccination, screening, and treatment efforts.^v

Between 30-50% of all cancers are preventable. Supporting programs that modernize health systems and patient access to care is imperative to reduce the burden of cancer.^{vi} The WHO consistently works to reduce preventable cancers by working with low and mid-resource countries on cancer control and prevention by providing resources on healthy diet and exercise, tobacco use, and vaccinations. Continued support of cancer control and prevention efforts will reduce the number of cancer deaths globally.

In order to achieve a more equitable global healthcare system that meaningfully benefits patients around the world, collective global partnership and multilateralism are critical. We strongly support continued membership in, and funding of, the WHO in order to support continued efforts to reduce the cancer burden in the United States and around the world. The undersigned leading cancer organizations encourage the United States Senate to allocate adequate funding for United States membership and participation in the World Health Organization. Thank you for your leadership and your support for people with cancer in the United States and globally.

Sincerely,

National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN®)
American Association of Cancer Research
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Society for Transplantation and Cellular Therapy
American Society of Hematology
American Society for Radiation Oncology
Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses
CancerCare
Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association
Prevent Cancer Foundation

Cc:

Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

Honorable Lindsey Graham, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

Honorable James E. Risch, Chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Honorable Bob Menendez, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

ⁱ The World Health Organization. Latest global cancer data: Cancer burden rises to 18.1 million new cases and 9.6 million cancer deaths in 2018. September 12, 2018. <https://www.who.int/cancer/PRGlobocanFinal.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Prager GW, Braga S, Bystricky B, et al. Global cancer control: Responding to the growing burden, rising costs and inequalities in access. 2018;3(2):e000285.

ⁱⁱⁱ The World Health Organization. How WHO is funded. May 29, 2020. <https://www.who.int/about/planning-finance-and-accountability/how-who-is-funded>. Accessed August 26, 2020; The World Health Organization. Programme budget 2018-2019. https://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/budget/PB2018-2019_en_web.pdf. Accessed August 26, 2020.

^{iv} State, Foreign Operations, Agriculture, Rural Development, Interior, Environment, Military Construction, and Veteran Affairs Appropriations Act, 2021, H.R. 7608, 116th Cong. (2020).

^v The World Health Organization. World Health Assembly adopts global strategy to accelerate cervical cancer elimination. August 19, 2020. <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/19-08-2020-world-health-assembly-adopts-global-strategy-to-accelerate-cervical-cancer-elimination>. Accessed August 19, 2020.

^{vi} The World Health Organization: Key Facts. September 12, 2018. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer>