

July 14, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer:

We, the undersigned scientific organizations representing tens of thousands of scientists working to advance the American research enterprise, are alarmed by President Trump's actions to end the relationship between the U.S. and the World Health Organization (WHO). Withdrawing from the WHO removes the U.S. from a significant global leadership role and enables other countries to step forward, weakens research efforts globally, and threatens the health of Americans and the health of our economy. We ask Congress to do everything possible to maintain the United States' membership in and funding for the WHO for the health and security of our nation.

The WHO has been on the front lines of every major infectious disease outbreak since its founding, from AIDS to the Zika virus and – now – the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect American lives, we need the WHO to continue to be on the front line at the next outbreak and pandemic. International collaboration is central to research, particularly on diseases and pandemics. The WHO plays a key role in fostering scientific collaboration. It serves as a surveillance system as new diseases and outbreaks emerge. They support the sharing of vital information, data, and clinical samples. The U.S. and global research community needs this system and the data that is generated to develop vaccines and treatments.

A U.S. withdrawal from the WHO will be detrimental to our role as a leader in global health and would cede that role to others who may not be as transparent and forthcoming with information. Furthermore, choosing to do so during the worst global pandemic in a century puts administrative disagreements above saving lives. Like all organizations, the WHO may need reform to function optimally, but eliminating funding and thus removing America's opportunity for input in possible reform is not the way to achieve this. If WHO did not exist, Congress would likely need to work to create an entity that mirrors WHO's purpose without a global mandate to do so, which would be an expensive uphill battle.

Leaving this global community has the potential to significantly weaken the WHO's ability to respond to future public health threats and pandemics. The WHO directly benefits from surveillance support provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development and many US scientists. While we, as a nation and research community, are

understandably focused on COVID-19, other diseases like polio, measles, HIV, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases will continue to spread without active vaccination, treatment, and surveillance programs. Surveillance and detection systems that WHO supports enable countries to slow or stop outbreaks within their borders before they become expansive and harder to contain. Without U.S. membership, these efforts will be surely scaled back, likely resulting in grim outcomes.

On behalf of the U.S. research community, we are concerned with the potential dilution of U.S. leadership in global health and the loss of bi-directional benefit of participation in WHO on a host of public health matters. Therefore, we urge you to express public support for and continue to fund the WHO. We stand ready to join you in highlighting the benefits to Americans as well as to our global partners the value of membership in the WHO. For more information or should you have any questions, please contact Karen Goraleski, CEO of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) at kgoraleski@astmh.org or Chris Stelzig, Executive Director of the Entomological Society of America (ESA) at cstelzig@entsoc.org.

We thank you for your leadership and on-going support for global health, the importance of which has once again been demonstrated during this devastating global pandemic.

Sincerely,

American Anthropological Association
American Association for Anatomy
American Association for the Advancement of Science
AAAS-Caribbean Division
American Association of Immunologists
American College of Neuropsychopharmacology
American Mosquito Control Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
Biophysical Society
CDC Midwest Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Disease
CDC Northeast Regional Center for Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
CDC Southeastern Center of Excellence in Vector Borne Diseases
CDC Western Gulf Center of Excellence of VBDs
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Council of the North American Vascular Biology Organization
Delta Vector Control District
Entomological Society of America
Federation of American Scientists
Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA)
The Gerontological Society of America
Global Health Technologies Coalition
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science

Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California
Population Association of America
Research!America
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Study of Reproduction
Society for Vector Ecology
Society of Vacuum Coaters