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S. HRG. 119–071

Senate Hearings

Before the Committee on Appropriations

State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations

Fiscal Year 2026

119*th* CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

H.R. 5342/S. 2354

NONDEPARTMENTAL WITNESSES
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations, 2026 (H.R. 5342/S. 2354)

S. HRG. 119–071

STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

HEARINGS

BEFORE A

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

H.R. 5342/S. 2354

AN ACT MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2026, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Nondepartmental Witnesses
United States Department of State

Printed for the use of the Committee on Appropriations

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.govinfo.gov

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

60–279 PDF WASHINGTON : 2026

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STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met at 2:03 p.m., in room SD–138, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Lindsey Graham (Chairman), presiding.

Present: Senators Collins, McConnell, Boozman, Moran, Mullin, Schatz, Murray, Durbin, Shaheen, Coons, and Merkley.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Senator GRAHAM. The Committee will come to order. Secretary Rubio, thank you. We're probably violating the Geneva Convention doing all this in one day, but I know you've had a long day and I appreciate you coming to the Committee. To the new Members of the Committee, welcome. I look forward to working with you, Senators Britt and Mullin. I look forward to working with our new Ranking Member, Senator Schatz. Senator Coons and I worked extremely well, I'll try to keep that going from my end, and I know you will too.

We'll have opening statements. So, I'll start out, then we'll have six-minute rounds, then Senator Schatz, and we'll have Secretary Rubio. Then we'll recognize people as they come. The deadline for submitting fiscal year 2026 SFOP requests is May 22nd. To all the Members of the Committee, to our audience you're welcome to be here. If you disrupt, you'll get kicked out. So, let's start the Committee meeting with a couple ideas.

Reform at the State Department is welcomed. Secretary Rubio has reorganized the place in a way that I think is long overdue. And Marco, I want to congratulate you for sitting down and getting input from people on how we can make the State Department work better. I think your organizational efforts are going to pay dividends and I support them completely. People before you have been talking about it, but you've actually done it. So, congratulations. I think it'll be good for the country.

In terms of the budget, this is 48 percent below the enacted level, and Presidential budgets are given some consideration and this will get some consideration. Bottom line is, I believe that there is

space to save money in this account, and I look forward to finding a way to do that. Secretary Rubio is the right guy at the right time. We've had all kind of problems at USAID. We're trying to preserve functions that make sense and eliminate functions that are not in the best interest of the American taxpayer.

My view about this account is pretty well known. I would consider myself a fairly hawkish person, for lack of a better term, simply because I think the best way to stay safe is deal with problems before they get worse and put bad guys on notice that if you screw with America, you do so at your own peril and we have allies who trust us. I think we're paying a heavy price from the way we got out of Afghanistan.

I spent the weekend with the Secretary in Turkey as he met with the foreign minister of Syria, as he met with the foreign ministers of all NATO nations, and I was very impressed with Secretary Rubio trying to make sure that America first was burden sharing. You need to do more, you need to up your game, but we're committed to a world order here, and we're committed to making sure that the world is a good place to live in.

Having said that, Syria. We have a chance here. Secretary Rubio allowed me to be in the meetings and I met the foreign minister of Syria. This is a very tenuous government, for lack of a better word. The people in charge of Syria took over by force of arms, but I've been quite frankly impressed with their willingness to engage with us and Saudi Arabia, and their commitment to rejecting Iran and moving the country in a new direction.

Secretary Rubio this morning said that it could be a matter of weeks or months till Syria collapses. And I agree with him. Syria is designated a state sponsor of terrorism under U.S. law since 1979. I'm looking forward to Secretary Rubio's input about should we change that designation? Is it worth trying? My belief is that we have a moment here to provide some capability to this new government that should be conditions based, and I don't want that moment to pass. We have a situation in Syria that's just going to break the country up and continue regional conflicts.

Iran negotiations. Secretary Rubio has said something I completely endorse, no enrichment, 123 agreements would be available to the Iranians if they decided to dismantle the enrichment program. As Secretary Rubio indicated, I do not mind the Iranian regime having nuclear power. I mind them having the capability to make a bomb. So right now, they have about 600 pounds of highly enriched uranium at 60 percent, and in about a month they could go to 90 percent. They have one nuclear reactor, and the fuel for that reactor is provided by the Russians. And I'm okay with that.

Of these 600 pounds of highly enriched uranium, not one gram has been used to run their peaceful nuclear power plant. Clearly, they're stockpiling uranium to be a threshold nuclear nation, and that is unacceptable to me, and hopefully, to all of us. So, civilian nuclear power, yes. Enrichment, no. I think it's a good policy for the country to follow.

Russia, Ukraine. Secretary Rubio explained the role the Senate and the House plays in our system to the foreign ministers of NATO. But quite frankly, he's been very clear to the Russians that the Senate is a separate body with its own will. I hope President

Trump is right, that Putin wants peace, time will tell. He certainly doesn't act like a guy wanting peace. We have now 80 co-sponsors of sanctions against Russia for their invasion of Ukraine.

I would like to get this war over honorably and justly. And one of the problems we have with this war is China. In case you're listening in China, which I doubt you are, you are propping up Putin. If you would stop buying their cheap Russian oil, he'd have a reason to get to the peace table. India and China are propping up Putin's war machine, and the sanctions we have are secondary in nature. They put a 500 percent tariff on any country that buys Russian oil, gas, uranium to prop up the Putin war machine. This body will move sooner rather than later if Putin doesn't get to the table. And to China, you want to be a normal country, act normally. Quit buying cheap oil with blood mixed in it to keep a war going that you could end tomorrow if you chose to.

Your plate is about as full as anybody I've ever seen. You're juggling so many things at once, and I just admire you and the way you've conducted yourself and I think you're the right person at the right time. So welcome to the Committee.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Chairman Graham. Secretary, good to see you again. It's been an hour or so. For all of the disruption of the past few months, we are still in a position to write a bipartisan bill in SFOPs, but things need to change if we're going to be successful. If the goal—and I want everyone to hear this, including my democratic colleagues, if the goal is to reform American foreign assistance so that we can do fewer things and better, then you will be pushing on an open door to begin with.

If the goal is to reduce overhead, make more strategic investments and eliminate the tiny fraction of programs that you feel aren't essential to those objectives, you'll have bipartisan support for that conversation. Making reforms to be smarter and more strategic with our investments, while also preserving the things that were already working, PEPFAR, FMF, lifesaving aid, disaster response is still possible.

And Mr. Secretary, I think, you know, I'm sincere in wanting to work with you to enact the bill that does just that. But we also have to have an honest conversation about what has been happening, and I want to address a few claims this morning. You said that PEPFAR is 85 percent functional. You've actually cut it to 70 percent. And by law, you are required to spend the remainder. You have said repeatedly that only 12 percent of assistance reaches local populations, quoting Samantha Power from a previous report, that is actually not true.

The USAID report from last year found that 12 percent of aid is implemented by local organizations, but that's completely separate from the question of how much aid is actually reaching people. That's Catholic charities, that's the World Food Program. That's CARE, that is not overhead. Those are other organizations, not local organizations, but flagship American organizations that deliver aid abroad.

You have said there is waste and fraud and abuse. I encourage you to make any referrals necessary to the inspectors general.

You've said sharing information and taking comments from Congress is essential, but there was only one briefing. I'm hoping all of that can change. As I said earlier, the changes that you're making are not occurring in a vacuum. They are having catastrophic outcomes in the real world.

Kids are dying, mothers are passing HIV onto newborns, we are abandoning our Indo-Pacific partners and paving the way for China to swoop in, and allies are having to beg for the FMF, which they've come to rely on. Even the few programs that have been retained are having a hard time implementing effectively. Fighting HIV/AIDS, helping partners defend themselves, respond to disasters, that is not woke or leftist or radical. It is a foundation of American foreign policy and they're all under threat.

And anytime we've asked for clarity about what the administration is doing, we've gotten very little. The programs that you've repeatedly pointed to as wasteful make up less than a half a percent of the total SFOPs budget. So we're talking about less than a half a percent of less than a half a percent of American discretionary spending. And if the deal was to immediately take all of those offending programs, eliminate them and enact them, you would be pushing on an open door.

But most of all, I want you to understand how important I think it is for the United States of America, for President Trump, for you as a secretary, for us to get to some rhythm of bipartisanship where the Article I branch works with you to enact an SFOPs bill. We are ready to do so, but we need some level of correspondence, interaction, transparency, and cooperation. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Rubio.

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE MARCO RUBIO, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Secretary RUBIO. Well, thank you. And I'm not going to give the written remarks. I'm just going to sort of walk you through this a little bit, that's the way these things are supposed to work, I hope. And let me first start out by saying what is the goal here? Because I think it's important, even though we're going to talk about spending and all that, you're going to do your own appropriations process. We recognize that.

But I wanted to explain to you the organization. You have a chart behind you, the new organizational chart. And this is really the launchpad because that's what we're funding. That's what the appropriations bill will be funding. If you had the old one, you would struggle to see what the big difference. I mean, they're different, but there's still a lot of boxes up there. And I want you to understand the primary thing we did, that I wanted to do, and that I alluded to during my confirmation hearing.

I want the entire toolbox of American foreign policy to reside within the Department of State, and particular within our regional bureaus that cover the different regions of the world, and ultimately down to our Embassy. Senator Graham mentioned a moment ago about Syria. It was going to be one of the first test cases of whether this works or not.

And what I mean by that is we have an Embassy. It's obviously an exile, it's outside. It's in Turkey. We're going to rely on them

to tell us, "Okay, we're on the ground. We've gone in, we've met with the transitional authorities. Here are the things they need. These are the three, four, or five things they need right now." And we need to be nimble enough to provide that. But it needs to be driven from the bottom up, not the top down.

I want you all to understand what I inherited when I go into the State Department. I get a memo asking for a decision. Sometimes these memos have 30 to 35 boxes in them that have to be checked off. Each box has to be checked off by somebody on a desk before it even gets to me. That just doesn't work. It certainly doesn't work in the 21st century when events happen very quickly. And so, we need to be nimble enough to make a decision, but we also have to have—make sure that these decisions are being made as close to the front lines as possible.

What is the front lines of diplomacy? It's our embassies. It's the men and women who are deployed abroad on the ground who are hearing every single day. And so that's our number one goal. The number two goal is to have, as I said, all the tools of foreign policy in the same toolbox. Foreign aid is a tool of our foreign policy. It is not the only tool of our foreign policy. It has to be taken in conjunction with all of these other things that we do. And they have to be intertwined.

Now, perhaps your experience is different, but I went to multiple countries around the world where I would go to the Embassy and the Embassy was upset at USAID, because the Embassy was pursuing one route, maybe closer to a leader who was less than ideal. But we had a geopolitical interest why we want to get closer—why we wanted to get closer to these people. And then USAID was funding a program that made the government angry. And so, it cut off our bill.

Now, maybe we still do that, but there has to be a balance here. There can't be of the two separate entities arguing with each other and some cases not even communicating. In other cases, this is my recent trip to the Caribbean where they told me, America's always been very generous at giving us things you think we need as opposed to the aid we think we need.

And the aid they think they need in some of these countries is they need to build up police departments. They need to build up a law enforcement so they can enter the drugs and secure the streets. And if they get that right, then they can send kids to school, then they can attract foreign investment to their country. But they have to get that part right.

The third dynamic that I say, and I leave humanitarian aside, because obviously natural disasters happen and these things will recur. But the best foreign aid is the foreign aid that ends. You know why it ends?

[Audience interruption.]

Secretary RUBIO. The best foreign aid is the foreign aid that ends, because it's achieved its purpose. So, take country X and they say, we want help with our law enforcement, the best foreign aid is foreign aid where at some point that country doesn't need it anymore because now they're self-sufficient. South Africa's—I'm sorry, South Korea is a great example.

South Korea was once poorer than North Korea. South Korea was once an aid dependent nation. Today it's an aid donor and the 9th, 10th largest economy in the world. That has to be the goal of our foreign aid. It has to be that it ultimately ends because it creates self-sufficiency. There are other tools of foreign aid, by the way, whether it's the investment funds, we have a Millennium Challenge grant. Those are outside my direct control or purview. They're under the committee's purview, and there will be efforts that reform there as well and potentially even expansion in one of them. Although that won't be my decision solely.

So, as you move forward in some of this, and as you'll see some of the features of the budget we presented before you, one of the ideas we have is having a global health programs account. The other is having a consolidated humanitarian assistance account. And the combination of these two things will allow us to deliver aid as part of the package driven from the ground up. I said this at the previous hearing. One of the most important things, I feel, one of the most useful things to me in my time at the department, has been the cables. The cables that I get from ambassadors.

We have gotten so many ideas from those cables. Would those ideas have ultimately made the way to me, maybe, I don't know, but maybe months from now or weeks from now, I want more of that in the department. And I want to empower embassies to be able to make decisions about which programs we should be funding, where the money should be going. I want when an ambassador goes into a meeting for she or he to be able to say to them, here is a portfolio of things we can offer, which ones would make the most sense to you.

So, we're trying to accommodate that through the creation of these two funds. It's important that we're not walking away from foreign aid. We'll still be the world's largest foreign aid donor by a lot. It won't even be close. But we want to target it more effectively. Another feature is this America First Opportunity Fund, which frankly will allow us to be more nimble in providing funds for specific programs that arise outside the normal cycle of funding. And Syria, once again, is a great example.

We don't have any money in the fiscal year's budget for Syria, because frankly, none of us thought we'll be talking about helping the Syrian government 6 months ago or 8 months ago. But now we have an opportunity to do it. And rather than have to go through reprogramming and all kinds of shuffling, to have the flexibility at some level to be able to respond quickly to something like that, that might be multifaceted in the approach is an important thing to consider as well as aligning it to other priorities we have as an administration.

So, I do look forward to working with you because frankly, I have to. You pass the preparations bills, but also because I think it can be very constructive.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF STATE, MARCO RUBIO

Thank you, Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee for inviting me to address you today.

I know we are here to discuss appropriations, but I would like to begin by discussing the State Department's work over the past few months.

And how proud I am of the steps we have already taken to implement President Trump's s vision of an America-first foreign policy.

Secure borders, safe communities, and zero tolerance for criminal cartels are once again the guiding principles of our foreign policy.

We've deepened partnerships with Mexico, El Salvador, and others to intercept illegal migra8on at the source and break the back of foreign terrorist organizations like MS–13 and Tren de Aragua.

We are working with law enforcement to revoke the status of foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality, threaten our citizens, and express support for this nation's enemies.

The Department has taken President Trump's policy message across Europe, securing the NATO Secretary General's commitment to increased defense spending, recalibrating transatlantic political and economic relations to better serve American interests, and alongside Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, moving decisively to end the Ukraine war.

Last month, I hosted the foreign ministers of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo at the State Department to initiate the preliminaries of a peace agreement facilitated by Senior Advisor Boulos in coordination with the White House National Security Council. That agreement will end years of conflict and open the way for American investment.

In the Middle East, the Administration's maximum pressure campaign has secured the release of the last living American hostage held by Hamas, a pledge by the Houthis to abandon attacks on American ships and forced Iran to beg for talks with the United States.

We are resetting America's trade relationship with the world through pro-growth tariffs to balance trade and raise revenue. On every continent, except perhaps Antarctica, where the penguins are proving difficult, we are supporting USTR's work to negotiate trade deals that protect American workers and secure investment that will grow our economy.

The Department is confronting China's nefarious influence from the Indo-Pacific to Africa to Latin America. The era of indulging the Chinese Communist Party as it abuses trade practices to steal our technology and floods our Nation with fentanyl is over.

Today, I present the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget request for the Department of State.

This Budget, totaling $28.5 billion, will allow the Department to fulfill its mission while also proposing the recission of $20 billion in duplicative, wasteful, and ideologically driven programs.

Last month, I announced a department-wide reorganization, the principles of which are reflected in our fiscal year 2026 budget request.

Henceforth, every bureau and office will have a clear mission. The Department will speak with one voice, guided by our statutory mandates and national interests—not fads or fringe academic theories.

A core principle of this reorganization is the belief that what matters is not the size of budgets but the agility with which they can be deployed.

That is reflected in the new America First Opportunity Fund, or A1OF—a $2.9 billion flexible account that consolidates numerous fragmented and inefficient foreign assistance programs.

It will allow the Department to respond rapidly to crises, engage proactively with critical partners like India and Jordan, support essential repatriation efforts, and confront strategic threats from near-peer competitors like China.

The A1OF builds on the lessons we learned from USAID, the Department's existing foreign aid award system's failures, and the few significant successes.

Consistent with the President's executive order, the Department has been reviewing our more than 15,000 foreign aid awards; we have already found billions diverted to ideological causes, including climate activism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and LGBTQ initiatives in foreign nations.

These programs were counterproductive to American interests, wasting taxpayer money and provoking resentment abroad.

They reflected State Department culture, where the creation of new offices and programs became a pathway to career advancement, and dedicated public servants were discouraged from finding ways to improve or streamline existing programs.

A State Department where everything took too long, cost too much money, involved too many individuals, and failed the American people.

It is time to show how foreign assistance can be an accountable and effective component of an America First Foreign Policy.

Going forward, the America First Opportunity Fund, the consolidated Global Health Programs Account, and the new consolidated Humanitarian Assistance account, will become models for delivering life-saving and strategic assistance that advances U.S. diplomatic, security, and economic goals.

As Secretary, I have the honor of leading the world's most talented diplomatic workforce.

They deserve better.

They deserve clear responsibilities and chains of command.

They deserve a State Department that unleashes their full potential from the ground up, harnessing the capacities of every Embassy, consulate, and bureau to set a course for a new American century.

One where the power and prestige of the United States are unequaled by any other force in the world.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me say, first of all, welcome, Secretary Rubio. I hope that you look forward to working with us, not only because you have to, but also because you want to. And I keep wondering how it's for you to be on the other side of the dais. But we're very happy to have you in the position that you are.

I do want to follow up and talk with you about the global health programs. I obviously share the goal of evaluating programs, reforming them, to root out wasteful spending, reduce overhead costs, even question whether or not a particular program is achieved, is subjective, and is no longer needed. However, I'm also mindful that U.S. International assistance plays a key role in helping us to respond to humanitarian crises, fight the spread of deadly diseases like Ebola and project soft power.

And that's why I'm concerned that the President's budget request proposes a cut of 62 percent below the enacted level of 2025 for global health programs. Are you concerned that if we cut back by that amount, that China is going to step in and pick up the terminated USAID health programs, particularly in Southeast Asia?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, let me first say China has no history in the past or even now. I know that there's been some talk about this, but they really have demonstrated no willingness or capability to deliver humanitarian aid at scale to anyone. Their aid is largely driven by loans, sometimes low-interest and no interest loans, but nonetheless loans and then other times, you know, traditional loans to trap nations.

They also give you the money so that you hire their companies to do the work. But on the space of humanitarian, they're not a major player. I said even on humanitarian assistance, the United States dwarfs the next 9 or 10 countries on the list in terms of what we provide and we intend for that to continue and that that is part of this budget.

We obviously work with you to find what the number needs to be to fit the need. But I can tell you that one of the reasons why the number is so stark is because, you know, the reductions that happen at USAID transferred some of these programs over under State. And so now we have to accommodate that within our overall budget. And so we'll have to work with the Committee to find out what the right number is to fit the need. But I'll say that it cannot be in—no matter what, I think we're living in a time where it's essential that we recognize that this is not a time of largess.

We're going to have to—in my view, going to have to limit how much we spend in general as a government, given the fact that just a few days ago we saw a downgrade to our debt. These are problematic things and other nations need to step up and do more. And it's frustrating to me to see how much money we invest in certain countries, albeit on what we term humanitarian or global health, but when you look at the other side of the ledger, all the business deals, all the critical mineral deals, all the other—all the votes at the United Nations are all aligned with China or Russia or Iran.

And so I do think that has to be taken into account here. We're humanitarian. We cannot solve all of the world's humanitarian problems. There are many. We can contribute, and we'll continue to be the largest contributor in the world, but I do think how we allocate the limited resources of our government has to somehow be viewed through the lens of the benefit to the United States. Certainly, in the short to—in the mid to long term.

Senator COLLINS. The administration also included Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance, in its list of terminated programs. And you've always been a very strong advocate for that program, which has resulted in 1.1 billion children being immunized and averted more than 18 million deaths. And I would point out that the United States is not the largest donor. We actually ranked third behind the United Kingdom and the Gates Foundation.

But without the U.S. doing what is traditionally done in this program, Gavi will be unable to vaccinate 75 million of the 500 million children it traditionally has reached every year. And I'm really concerned that that's going to lead to preventable death, like tuberculosis and pneumonia. So I think about how the Defense Department always due to our law, has each of these services give us a list of unfunded priorities.

Would that be on your personal list of an unfunded priority?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, let me, first of all, we still are doing vaccines. We're still doing vaccines for malaria, for example. We're still doing tuberculosis, we're still doing AIDS funding as well. What we have done is we're reviewing our relationship with a number of multinational multilateral institutions across the board, because many of them have strayed from their core purpose. The World Health Organization being one of them, which I personally viewed did a very poor job in the early days of COVID, as an example.

So we're also working closely with HHS to identify alternatives to some of these existing multilateral organizations that we think could end up helping us provide the aid we provide, to reach more people for less money, in essence, in a more efficient way. So we'll clearly include that in, in our work that we're doing. I'm not prepared to tell you whether we've identified today what those alternative entities would look like, but we definitely want to find one. This is the kind of aid we want to continue to provide, but not through the existing mechanisms that we have found wanting in many cases.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Schatz.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you. Just to follow up on Senator Collins' line of questioning. I guess the analogy is, you know, say a hospital that's running inefficiently and a turnaround guy comes in and

says, "I got a plan for reorganizing this hospital. We're going to do delivery system reform, we're going to use technology, we're going to be aggressive, we're going to be fearless. And in the meantime, we're going to lay off half of our staff because this thing doesn't work efficiently." The practical impact of that is death, and that's what we're talking about.

And so every time we talk about the practical, near term, immediate, real world, geopolitical and humanitarian impacts of what has happened, especially to USAID, you pivot very skillfully and maybe even correctly to what needs to be reformed in the State Department itself and in the interaction and relationship between aid and State. That's not what I'm asking you about.

I'm asking you about why in the world we wouldn't do this in the regular order. In order to put USAID under the State Department and better align it, we need a statute. In order to reform all of these programs, we need an SFOPs bill. You can't just come in and light the place on fire and say, well, it was a mess.

And so I just want to understand what's the path forward, because people really are dying. It's not as though Catholic Relief Services or CARE or the World Food Program or a bunch of, you know, leftists coming out and complaining about everything that's happening because they want to get you, this is actually happening. People are vacating where they work and then in some instances, the Chinese government comes in and provides the exact same service, not a similar service, but the same program. They just do it, we'll do it. And then in some instances, nobody does it, and as a result, people die.

And so I'm just wondering, where do you think the path forward is for us to work? Article I, Article II, former colleagues to get this thing back on track?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, I think the first path is—let me just say on the regular order part, sure, we want to do that. It would be great to make all these things statutory and codify, and that would be ideal. I will say, I was a member of this body for, I don't know, 16 years. And we always talked about doing it by regular, never got to it. So now's the time to do it because we really have to do it now.

The second point I would make is the U.S. is going to continue to be a very generous donor for I would venture to guess, that for the rest of our lifetime, no nation on earth, if we can still afford it, no nation on earth will continue to do more for humanitarian assistance for food and medicine and life-saving services and even for developmental assistance. But I also think we have to recognize this. We cannot continue to be the foreign aid provider for everyone on everything. We just can't do it. We can't do it efficiently and we cannot afford to do it either.

And if we're going to, we have to—we do not have unlimited resources. And so we've now entered an era particular in geopolitics where we have to be very careful about where we invest our money, where we provide aid. Humanitarian systems aside, you have a mudslide somewhere, an earthquake, a hurricane and we're going to help people. I don't know how much we would want necessarily geopolitics to play into those sorts of decisions.

Senator SCHATZ. What's the proposed budget cut in the humanitarian accounts?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, the humanitarian account right now basically is—the rest of it is reflected at over 50 percent in the proposed amount that we have right now before you. But we believe that we can provide these essential services while reducing some of the redundancies that were happening through this—for lack of a better term, this foreign aid industrial complex.

Some of these projects—so I think you understand this perhaps better than most. Some of these projects had a prime contractor who had a sub, who had a sub, who had a sub, who had a sub, who had a local provider. That's crazy. That's lunacy. Why do I need six subs to pass one to the other to ultimately go down to the ground? I think we can get it from maybe from the prime to the sub in some cases directly to the person—the group on the ground through our Embassy. Our Embassy can say, this community, here's the best people to do it. And I can avoid all those layers of NGOs.

Senator SCHATZ. Secretary, part of the problem right, is our tolerance for risk. Because if we establish a bunch of criteria and requirements and pre-audit, then you increase administrative costs, right? And I'm one of these people who thinks that it's not unreasonable to start to capitate or slowly ramp down administrative costs, but administrative costs are not 88 percent, right? That 12 percent versus the rest of it cut is what money goes to local NGOs in Africa or Asia or Pacific Islands or wherever. And we should be increasing that number. And we have been increasing that number.

But it's the precipitousness with which this is all being done that is actually causing reputational damage. A lot of us are doing CODELs and when we sort of go overseas and we sort of, you know, temporarily take off our partisan hats, we interact with the same providers and we see kids on half rations getting smaller and smaller. We see kids getting HIV/AIDS from their parents and nothing you said, nothing you said in order to implement anything that you're talking about, is it necessary for us to allow children to die and yet that is what's happening.

And so can we please separate these two questions of should we reform the State Department, should we reform the foreign aid enterprise, and should we do it in such a catastrophically unlawful way that people around the world die and people come to believe that they can't believe that America is a reliable partner anymore. And so, I just—if we can please separate these questions and get to writing a bill, I think the country will be better for it.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. To the Committee Members I very much believe in soft power for lack of a better term. Why do we have PEPFAR? Not only is it the right thing to do, I think it's just smart foreign policy. If you can save a child, the parents will probably have a good view to you. So Gavi, you know, keeping people vaccinated, that makes perfect sense.

To the people who believe it over there, doesn't matter to us, how do diseases start usually over there? I'd like to get ahead of it over there before it gets here. I'd like to have less hungry children so the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and ISIS can't recruit these people because they're starving. What would you do if your family was starv-

ing? Almost anything. 500 bucks goes a long way for a starving family.

So this to me is national security in another form. And the people who don't get that, you are just, you're missing a lot. You are missing how terrorists recruit. They love chaos. They love situations where people starving and can't send their kids to school and they can't feed themselves because they'll fill in that vacuum. I'll say this about Secretary Rubio, he gets it better than anybody, and I'll work with you to change the system to make it more logical, more effective. But I am here to tell you, if we eliminate some of these programs that create stability over there, the chaos will surely come here. And if you don't get that, you've missed a lot of history.

Having said that, Marco what you're doing at the State Department is long overdue and we'll find some common ground through the SFOPs process to accommodate the reforms you want, but also to make sure that our values are intact and that we're smart with our dollars to make sure that we're not creating conflict where we could avoid conflict.

If you're tired of war, count me in. I think I know how most of these wars start, they start with terrorists being able to recruit people. And if we can take that off the table, we're safer. I'm going to go through a list of issues real quick.

Do you think it's in our interest to relieve sanctions in Syria?

Secretary RUBIO. Yes, incrementally.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you have as your objective to change the state sponsor of terrorism designation over time?

Secretary RUBIO. In Syria?

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

Secretary RUBIO. Yes. If they meet the standard.

Senator GRAHAM. Is it your position when it comes to Iran that civilian nuclear power through 123 agreements is in our national interest?

Secretary RUBIO. I think that if it prevents them from having a nuclear weapon, that would be in our national interest.

Senator GRAHAM. Right. So dismantlement plus a 123 agreement. Deny the enrichment business, and if you do that, you can have a 123 agreement. Is that a fair summary of where you're at?

Secretary RUBIO. Yes. Or something equivalent to it that allows them, if they want to have a civilian nuclear program, but not the ability to enrich.

Senator GRAHAM. Count me in. I think that's very smart. We keep saying, and I was with you all weekend, we were great talking about wanting this war honorably and justly and do you agree that the way we end the war in Ukraine with Russia could affect how China views what they do in Taiwan?

Secretary RUBIO. I think the way we end the war could impact how China views it. I think the continuity of this war will also impact it because it's draining resources from us and from our allies that could be spent on building up our capacities in the Indo-Pacific. So both can be true.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, I totally agree with you. When it comes to Russia getting to the table do you think Putin's ready to make peace?

Secretary RUBIO. I think Putin will always cut the deal he thinks it's in his best interest for the country, for Russia, and for his view of the world. I think right now, frankly, he has said, here's the latest, he says they're going to submit a proposal that would lead to a ceasefire that would then lead to a broader negotiation. I think we'll know from the context of that proposal where their mindset is and where they stand.

Senator GRAHAM. We keep telling people, rightly so, that the Senate, we can't stop. I mean, we want to work with you. These sanctions were designed to help not hurt. I'm trying to help the President giving leverage. To my democratic colleagues, thank you for being on board. We're trying to get the right answer here.

This is not a competition between us and the administration. Just trying to coordinate an effort to end the war that President Trump is right to want to end. Here's my question, and we'll know in a couple of weeks whether or not they're serious. Do you believe that if there were tariffs on China for buying cheap Russian oil, that would make a difference toward Chinese policy regarding Russia?

Secretary RUBIO. A 500 percent tariff?

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

Secretary RUBIO. I think that has an impact on nations.

Senator GRAHAM. I agree. Do you agree that if China stopped buying oil from the shadow fleet, it would put a real dent in Putin's war machine?

Secretary RUBIO. I do. I think it's widely understood, including by our European partners, and I remind them of this all the time and we're together with them, that there is no way that Russia could sustain its war effort without assistance from China. China has helped Russia as much as they can without getting caught.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think Europe is serious about doing their part when it comes to sanctions on Russia and trying to find a solution to end this war?

Secretary RUBIO. Yes, we actually saw the—we've met with them this weekend in Rome, and they're on path, they're on route now to maybe as early as the middle part of this week, applying additional sanctions on Russia.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you very much. I think Senator Merkley. I think Merkley is what I've got there.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much.

Senator GRAHAM. No, Coons. There you are. Senator Coons. Senator Merkley. Peace is breaking out on the Committee.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and good to be with you again, Secretary Rubio. I wanted to make sure that the point's been made as I suspect it has been by my colleague, that reform to USAID and reform to some of the authorities and the spending in the legislation that we passed in the last Congress, is something that could easily have been done with partnership with this Committee and with Congress and should have been done that way.

I wanted to touch on a few things that you and I worked on that I think deserve continued support and that I think are important for us to sustain. Senator Graham and I worked to pass the Global Fragility Act in 2019. You were a co-sponsor. It was signed into law

by President Trump, and it's designed to save literally billions of dollars by addressing root causes of terrorism in fragile countries. As you put it, at the time, "As the U.S. responds to humanitarian crises, we must address the factors driving instability and violence. It's both moral and in our national security to promote stable and prosperous countries, and I'm proud to introduce this legislation."

I am planning to work with Senator Graham on reauthorizing it this year. The primary implementing entity had long been the Bureau of Conflict Operations and Stabilization. That's a bureau that's been restructured. Do you still agree it's in our national interest to have a targeted strategy to address the root causes of terrorism? And will you work with us to sustain the capabilities we need in the State Department to continue the Global Fragility Act's work?

Secretary RUBIO. Yes. And let me add to that because it's a good example. Number one, part of the real—just because we got rid of a office name something, doesn't mean the function goes away. It means that we want to drive that through the regional bureau. So a great example of Global Fragility, I keep going back to this over and over again, is Syria. And if that fragility is not addressed, there's going to be—there already is. I mean, ISIS is already growing there and potentially going even more dangerous. If there's a civil war in Syria, we're going to have an ungoverned space where multiple groups are going to break out and not just threaten the region, but ultimately potentially the homeland.

So it's a great example of how Global Fragility can be applied to the real world. We have to do it very quickly. We have to be able to act quickly in this regard which is one of the things we hope to do by being able to drive this down to the regional and local levels.

Senator COONS. I also work closely with Chairman Graham, with the Chairman McCaul, with Ranking Member Meeks and over 100 co-sponsors of both parties to enact the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation. It was enacted through the NDAA, there's funding allocated to it. You stated in your confirmation on January 15th that this was the sort of public private partnership that struck you as deserving of support. And I would hope you would move quickly to execute creating it. It simply requires your signature and obligating the funds and appointing the board.

Chairman Graham and I are also working on a similar bill that would address food insecurity again through a public private partnership, a foundation that would rely on as much private sector funding and philanthropy as government funding. Do you still support these foundations, and is this something you look forward to working with us?

Secretary RUBIO. Yes. And we'll get you an answer—I mean, we'll get you a decision on that very quickly, which is what you're looking for is us to go through and try to implement the law.

Senator COONS. Yes.

Secretary RUBIO. I recall the plan correctly. We'll get to that fairly quickly. We've had a lot going on over the last 4 months, but we'll get to it, including a hundred and something reports that we inherited, that we're overdue. We're working through those as well. But because you raised it here today, if you give me a few days, I'll get you an action on it.

Senator COONS. Thank you. We have spoken about the MCC, the Millennium Challenge Corporation is a Bush era initiative that used metrics and accountability working against corruption and in long term partnership with countries to give them an alternative to Chinese financing, as you've described it, and I agree, debt trap financing. There's current compacts active in countries like Indonesia, the Solomon Islands, Nepal, Kiribati, where it gives transparency and cost sharing.

You were the chair of the board of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. I understand from our discussion this morning that you're aware it's in some transition. Can you just confirm it's going through reform and will not be shut down wholesale?

Secretary RUBIO. Yes, I can confirm. We're on the board, we don't operate it obviously. We're on the board, but it's not a State department function. We're one of the board members, albeit the chair and actually our deputy Chris Landau is serving in that role when I'm not available to be at these meetings and so forth.

My understanding as of the latest updates that I've gotten with the work that's being done is it's undergoing a reform effort, a streamline effort, but not a take-down effort.

Senator COONS. I think it would be an unforced error for us to hand away the relationships and the competition with China that our metrics based and transparent that the MCC has put in place. So I hope to work with you on that.

Last your testimony highlights an America First Opportunity Fund as a more flexible and responsive account that will address waste in foreign assistance and be more agile. But at least as I see it in your proposal, the account replaces 9 billion of programs with a 3 billion account to cover everything from countering the PRC, comparing Russia, aiding Jordan and others. Could you just briefly describe how you imagine that math working and how this fund being sufficient to meet a wide menu of needs?

Well, part of it is we found that some of these programs underneath it were scattered, some of them were duplicative. There were some inefficiencies. So we truly believe—and what the right number is, obviously, actually we'll have to work with you on, but we truly believe that we can deliver on the same goals for substantially less than what those combined pre-existing funds projects would've cost.

But what it's going to enable us to do is to ensure that assistance funds are directed towards the highest priority projects that we may have on any given basis, on any given moment, given global events that are happening. It provides in addition to these existing programs, it provides us being nimble enough to deal with a contingency in a world that rapidly evolves as opposed to having to go back and repurpose existing funds to do it.

So that's really the goal of the fund, is to be able to move at the speed of relevance when it comes to global events, and not have to wait for the next funding cycle to come across or work through some reprogramming process that could take time for us to be able to respond quickly.

Senator COONS. I do think as a former senator I hope you'll agree that there has to be a modicum of consultation, review, and approval by this subcommittee and others. But the target of agility

responding to world events, I suspect you'll get bipartisan support for that. But there needs to be a congressional role in oversight and accountability. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. Senator Moran.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Chairman, I'd yield to the former Majority Leader, Senator McConnell.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator McConnell. You're up.

Senator MCCONNELL. Welcome, Mr. Secretary. Obviously, there's two ways to prevent war and to maintain America's position in the world. Hard power, soft power. Over my here, the people that have spoken mostly about the importance of soft power have been generals who know the cost of war. So we're talking about saving money and I'm all for that. Let's take a look at what it costs to have an actual war.

Thirty-seven percent of our GDP in World War II spent on defense, 13 percent in Korea, 9 percent in Vietnam, the Reagan build up about 6 percent of GDP. It worked. They didn't want to mess with us because they knew how strong we were going to be. And an equal partner, much less costly, is the soft power side. I think, I don't care what you call it or how you reorganize, but the basic functions that soft power provides are extremely important. You get a lot of friends for not much money, and we're being outmaneuvered, as you well know, in country after country after country by the People's Republic of China, who are effectively playing in ways that are more effective than we are.

So if you can figure out a way to reorganize it, and call it whatever you will, that role is extremely important. How are foreigners looking at us right now? I think they think we're losing interest. The previous administration didn't have a single budget for defense that even kept up with inflation. And unfortunately, because of the continuing resolution this year, it looks like more of the same.

So it strikes me, no matter how well the tariffs, for example, work out, that the perception at the beginning of this administration is that we want to fight with our allies and figure out some way to make an agreement with our enemies, which brings me to Ukraine. And I think the America that I believe in and most of us believe in, would find no equivalence between the Russians and Ukrainians. And so I'm hoping as this administration moves forward, it doesn't end up not facing the actual enemies we have now, North Korea, China, Russia, Iran, Iran's proxies, by working with our allies to stand up to them.

Just to take a specific example of how soft power makes a difference, look at a country like Burma that you've had an interest in and I have two over the years. Horrible place run by despicable people. Lots of storms and problems at one time or another. The Chinese are in there just operating effectively, and we, because of not honoring contracts and some of the other things that we were doing to try to be helpful, just completely getting outmaneuvered.

So having had to endure that, I'd be interested in your observations about what you think about soft power and how important it is to this country's future.

Secretary RUBIO. Sure. I mean, first of all, I think soft power is—the Department of State ultimately is a soft power entity. I mean, it's the department of peace, the department of war, the depart-

ment of defense. Our job is to try to prevent them. And so I do think that the model you've outlined, especially during the Cold War, was quite useful because during that time, that model served to keep societies from collapsing and becoming susceptible to Marxist regimes, taking them over.

That was the biggest fear during the Cold War, was that governments with high levels of poverty, would be attracted to a Marxist revolution that would overthrow an allied government and create another satellite state for the Soviet Union. We live in a different world today. The threats look different. In some cases, fragility is still a factor, but it is largely a factor that will lead to either a costly humanitarian crisis and in some cases operating in safe haven spaces for radical jihadists to threaten us here at home.

So the concept remains true. How it's applied is what has changed, because I think the context, and in that context, no matter how much we even would these reductions that are proposed before you, we would still be the single largest foreign aid donor on the planet by multiples. No one even comes close. I think Germany was second, if I recall the last time I checked. And it's not even close. That remains the case.

What we have to do now is apply that soft power to the places where it matters most to our national interests and to the programs that can make the biggest difference, the biggest impact and for furthering our national interest. I think it's possible to both be a humanitarian and at the same time further the national interest. And there are cases where perhaps there isn't going to be a national interest argument, we just do it because we don't want people to die, but we want to help alleviate suffering.

The case of Burma is an example. It wasn't just a reduction in aid because we had teams on the ground. It was actually local authorities that prevented us from getting involved or allowing certain aid to be distributed because they were in the middle of their own conflicts internally in the midst of it.

So some of these environments where we're trying to deliver aid are quite challenging. Even if we provide the money, we struggle to get it to the recipients because of some local impediment on the ground that could include, for example, in the case of Haiti, armed gangs that will hijack humanitarian shipments and steal them, just steal them as soon as they come into the country.

So it's not that we care less about Haiti, but I certainly don't think going into the hands of a Haitian gang and being stolen from the people we're intending to benefit.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and second chance to ask some questions of you today. Thank you for testifying in multiple committees. Back in March, you noted that you had revoked some 300 student visas using the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, which specifically says the Secretary of State can revoke a visa if a alien's activity in the U.S. would've a serious adverse foreign policy consequence. And that issue of 300, what's the number up to now? How many visas have you revoked?

Secretary RUBIO. I don't know the latest count. But we probably have more to do.

Senator MERKLEY. Can you give us an estimate?

Secretary RUBIO. Probably in the thousands at this point, depending. Not all of them are under that statute. Some are people—so there's two visa——

Senator MERKLEY. I don't want to go into separate issue.

Secretary RUBIO. No, no, no. They're related, but we can't conflate them because they're two different. One is the one you cited, national interest of the United States. Some of the visa revocations are happening because somebody violated the terms of their visa. They dropped out of school or they got convicted of a crime or some criminal investigation. Those are separate from what you've said.

Senator MERKLEY. So 300 in March, but now thousands. How many under this 1952 Act?

Secretary RUBIO. I'd have to get you a good answer, but probably under a thousand. But I have to give you the right—I don't want to speculate——

Senator MERKLEY. Would you follow up and get us the answer?

Secretary RUBIO [continuing]. As to the exact number.

Senator MERKLEY. And I'll tell you, this particular thing it does bother me. And you testified in Louisiana immigration court in a pretty expansive interpretation of that 52 law, saying that it could be for citizens, it extends to any non-citizen for past, current, or expected release statements or association. And that expected really caught my mind. That's this power rests solely—this 1952 rests solely with you and your interpretation.

Sounds like you're saying if you, the Secretary of State think you expect someone's beliefs or statements, past current, or future, then you can toss their visa.

Secretary RUBIO. Visa is not a right. It's a privilege.

Senator MERKLEY. So, I'll just say, and then I'm going to go onto another topic. I profoundly disagree. The Fifth Amendment is very powerful in protecting citizens and non-citizens alike with due process. I know this will be adjudicated in court, but the idea that one individual could on their opinion of someone's future activity or expected activity, that one individual being our Secretary of State can toss somebody's visa. Seems to me an extraordinary violation of due process.

I won't ask you to defend it now. I'm happy to put it in writing for you to give us a follow-up and explain it better. But I do think it's a fundamental attack on freedom because due process is the guardian of the gate to keep a government from taking away people's life or liberty. And liberty is what happens when you take away a visa without due process.

Senator MERKLEY. I want to turn to the issue my colleagues have mentioned, and that is there is a legal way to restructure the Secretary of State's department and USAID specifically. But what we saw on February 3rd was Elon Musk say, "Over the weekend, I tossed USAID into the wood chipper." That's a pretty profound weekend. It didn't involve consultation with Congress over the consequences. There was no rewriting of the law. There was no discussion of what funds could be delayed, frozen, redirected.

And the result is different groups have estimated how many people have died to date and will die over the course of a year or a prolonged period as a result of the destruction of the weekend of

February 1st and 2nd. Did Elon Musk have your support in putting USAID into the wood chipper?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, I don't think—that's a X post to it. I guess you're imagining a social media post is not a government——

Senator MERKLEY. Not at all. That's a quote. That's what he said.

Secretary RUBIO. Yes, that's okay. That's what he said. But ultimately what happened as acting director is all these decisions——

Senator MERKLEY. Did his actions have your full support?

Secretary RUBIO. The ones that I signed off on, yes. Which is the ones that happened because——

Senator MERKLEY. What about what Elon Musk did with USAID?

Secretary RUBIO. No, no. But understand these are contracts. All these contracts——

Senator MERKLEY. Did he do it without or with your support. That's what I'm trying to understand.

Secretary RUBIO. Well, those were not my actions——

Senator MERKLEY. His DOGE team did a lot of cancellations very, very quickly, and it fired a lot of people. I just wasn't clear to me whether that had your support or not.

Secretary RUBIO. No, the DOGE team didn't do anything. I did it. I was the one that made the decisions. I went through contracts, literally spreadsheets line by line. I remember being in a hotel, I believe in Guatemala, going through line by line on spreadsheets of contracts that were canceled, contracts that were approved, contracts that were either, that were amended. These are all contracts.

Senator MERKLEY. So in that case, I'll put the responsibility with you since you're taking credit for it, rather than with Elon Musk. But the Boston School of Public Health has a kind of a website where they post their estimated deaths as a result of the actions that were taken to dismantle USAID. And they're updating it continuously. So you go to it, the numbers keep changing. They have a 1 year estimate, but they also have what they estimate has happened to today.

And as of today, they estimate that the actions taken in putting USAID in the wood chipper, child malnutrition 53,500 more deaths. And I'm rounding off because the numbers are continuously changing. Child diarrhea, 45,400 more deaths, child pneumonia, 59,200 more deaths, malaria, 25,100 more deaths.

So what happened that weekend has resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of children, and the estimate for the end of this year is much, much higher. This happened because the law was not followed for consultation with Congress, analysis, bringing in experts, holding hearings. How do you kind of accept what you just put forward that it was your action to cancel these contracts, your contracts in this fashion, freezing funds, firing individuals has resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of children?

Secretary RUBIO. That's false. That's fake. That's just not true. That's a study based on if we canceled every one of these programs permanently. And I'm reading it right here because I'm glad you brought it up. It assumes a near total freeze in U.S. foreign for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases. There is not

a total freeze. 85 percent of PEPFAR recipients are receiving their care right now.

But the numbers you're saying, those aren't real numbers. I understand that's what the school said in the worst case dramatic scenario. And even then, I think it's exaggerated, but there's just no evidence of the fact that—I don't remember the numbers are—100,000 children have starved to death in the last 4 months because of the United States made reductions in USAID? Well, first of all is pretty atrocious. That would mean that nobody else in the world is doing anything. We're taking care of the entire planet?

Senator MERKLEY. Well, I must say, I think your response does not fit with what the published results were, but there's other groups that have done this as well. There's a study in nature with healthcare experts from a whole number of leading universities, and they said basically, if you shut down USAID, and it may not be fully shut down, but my colleagues who follow this closely say, you know, it's 80, 90 percent shut down and Nature study or published in Nature said, look because of what has happened, we will see some 15 million additional deaths over 15 years just from HIV, producing 14 million orphans and another 10 million people, children and adults dying from malnutrition, tuberculosis, diarrhea, malaria, and other diseases.

And there's even higher numbers from the Friends of the Global Fight Against AIDS. I think it's this rash shutdown without due process of law that is not coming and doing it in collaboration, with rewriting the law, freezing funds, canceling these contracts without consultation, that you have exacted enormous harm on the world.

Secretary RUBIO. Again, those numbers are saying are staggering and unrealistic. The reality of it is if what you're saying is that unless the United States funds foreign aid at this level in perpetuity, the world's going to suffer 50 million—15 million deaths in 15 years. Then every country should be voting for everything we want at the UN. Because we're basically funding and feeding the world.

Senator MCCONNELL. The number was 15 million in the study of Nature yes, from the shutdown of these programs.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. Senator Moran.

Senator MORAN. Chairman, thank you. Secretary Rubio, welcome back to Capitol Hill. Let me ask you to tell us as the State Department prepares to undertake restructuring of its humanitarian and aid operations, where does food assistance fit in within the department's strategic priorities and in which office will State place those programs?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, it'll be under the new directorate that will oversee both human rights and humanitarian affairs and foreign aid. The only ones that are going to be separated from that is military sales and military financing. But the primary driver of our humanitarian assistance, food assistance, medicine, will be through the new bureau that will handle that. It'll be a Senate confirmed position as well that will respond and answer to that—that they will answer to. And it'll be a priority, but it'll be structured in a way to deliver the most amount of money—the most amount of aid, at the least amount of cost in the most effective way.

Senator MORAN. Do you have a person in mind? Is this position in the process of being filled?

Secretary RUBIO. That will require Senate confirmation. I don't think—I don't believe that that position has been filled. There's someone acting in a temporary capacity—in an acting capacity at the moment. But we'll have to come back to you to find a nominee that will run that.

Senator MORAN. Let me highlight a couple of food programs. Food for Peace and what we call Dole McGovern Nutrition Program are two long standing initiatives with deep roots in my home State of Kansas. These programs, in my view, are critical tools in the fight against global hunger, the moral aspect of that, but also vital to Kansas farmers, to American agriculture producers, who helped deliver.

And this program started with the Kansas farmer who felt compelled to do something with excess grain piled on the ground at a time when people across the globe were still starving and hungry. I understand there were findings of mismanagement at USAID. I look forward to working with you in this subcommittee to make sure that mismanagement is something that stays out of our delivery of food aid.

I did join with Senator Hoeven and Senator Marshall in legislation that would transfer the administration of Food for Peace to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I have some sense that you are supportive of that concept. I have some sense that the Secretary of Agriculture is supportive of that concept. I have some sense that Office of Management and Budget is supportive of that concept.

This is my first opportunity to have a conversation with you. Tell me how I can be helpful to you and to the department in the cause of Food for Peace and its future.

Secretary RUBIO. Well, again that's still, obviously there's legislation out there that's pending on it, but I would argue that it's what you've described as the new arrangement under the Department of Agriculture will generally align with the idea that we want to—because no matter what, we still have to work with them on this program. It would align towards removing one more layer of government that allow us to both identify recipients and delivery mechanisms quicker and more effectively.

So generally, your perceptions are correct. We're very open to that transition being done. Obviously, whether it's done statutorily or otherwise it's certainly something we'd be open to because we think it has the potential to deliver assistance much quicker, much faster, much more efficiently, and perhaps to a broader set of people.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Secretary, Food for Peace, the Dole McGovern—let me ask about McGovern-Dole. Any observations in regard to that program?

Secretary RUBIO. We haven't made any determinations yet, but I would imagine that would fall under—if it was under our responsibilities, it would fall under the same bureau that's handling what we call that the Life Saving Assistance or Humanitarian Assistance.

Senator MORAN. My take from your answer is that there is a role for food aid programs to continue to exist, to be administered. The goal is to figure out how to reduce the bureaucracy and how to deliver more aid for the same bang for the buck.

Secretary RUBIO. I agree. We're not stopping foreign aid. I mean, we're going to continue foreign aid and at levels as generous, more generous than any other country in the world than most countries in the world combined. The question is how can we deliver it more effectively and ensure that it is aligned with our foreign policy priorities?

But in the case of food aid, as an example, there's no goal to end it or to stop doing this kind of work. It's more about how can we deliver it more efficiently and effectively and quickly and in ways that are aligned with our broader foreign policy. And to empower, again, I keep going back to this point because it's really important to make, empowering our regional bureaus to drive these programs. To identify chronic or critical needs, whether, whether they're acute or chronic, and allow us to quickly operationalize it.

As opposed to having a standoff bureau that views the whole entire world holistically, we're able to drive this at the local and regional level where they know what the priorities are and can drive this aid quickly.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Secretary, among the many things that you've said in this hearing this afternoon, that's one that certainly caught my attention as having merit, get the process where it's the closest to the crisis, the emergency, the facts are better known and implemented more closely to home in a foreign country.

Let me highlight one more feeding program. This one's about the future. There's a program called Feed the Future in which research is done in agriculture, designed to figure out how to produce more food. In other words, greater efficiency and the food that's needed in countries that have different kinds of opportunities to feed themselves.

How can we use the powerhouse of American agricultural research to find ways to better allow other countries not only receive food from food aid from us, but also to grow their own?

Secretary RUBIO. I think it's—imagine if you're an ambassador in a country that has a chronic food shortage and you're somehow able to provide them American ingenuity that allows them to produce more food at a lower cost using less land or less facility. That's an extraordinary thing to offer as part of our toolbox. But those are unique opportunities that probably exist in some places and not in others. And the ability to identify from the ground level, have an ambassador an Embassy or regional bureau, identify that as both in need and an opportunity. And then us to operationalize it, is exactly the kind of nimble programming that we want to be able to do.

But I see great benefit in the ability of us to align—and it's also, by the way, the kind of foreign aid that ends, because once they have acquired the capacity to do it, it's helped our companies to find a place where they can deploy it, it's helped them to develop independence, and it creates good faith among the nations in the future. That is part of the soft power that Senator McConnell was talking about a moment ago.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Secretary, I think the components that I've outlined are three circumstances. You meet the needs of someone in a crisis today, but the long-term goal is to help people around the globe be self-sufficient. Countries to care for themselves and re-

duce the role, perhaps, of the United States in that effort. And I would highlight for what you just said, the program that provides the agricultural research to accomplish what you described as a positive development is a program called Food for Peace—I said that wrong. Is a program called Feed the Future. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY. Thank you very much, Chair Graham. Senator Schatz, welcome to your new role. I look forward to working with both of you.

Secretary Rubio, I'm deeply concerned that you have overseen a systemic campaign to dismantle USAID, impound billions of dollars that this Committee actually provided, and unilaterally remake the Department of State without the slightest bit of concern that you lack the authority to do that without Congress. It has created chaos. It's caused preventable deaths across the globe, and it has undermined American leadership.

As Ranking Member Schatz noted, what you've done is outright illegal, a complete violation of bipartisan appropriation laws, the Impoundment Control Act, and the Anti-Deficiency Act. Within hours of taking office President Trump halted all foreign aid in flagrant defiance of the law. Now, under your watch Secretary Rubio, that freeze was implemented with chaos and cruelty, and then you illegally shut shuttered USAID, placing everyone on leave, halting lifesaving work, literally locking people out of the building and out of their devices, even in dangerous corners of our world.

You paid people not to work, abandoned our partners across the globe, and chaotically recalled global staff putting more than 1600 Americans who served our country abroad in limbo. And when you shut down the USAID payment system, you even refused to pay for services provided before the illegal freeze. You fought all the way to the Supreme Court against paying for services U.S. businesses already rendered with funding that Congress already provided.

And I know you know Mr. Secretary, but you lost, and I assume you need the reminder because to this day, you have not made all the payments that are required by our Nation's highest court. And as a result, American companies continue to lay off American workers. And by the way, you do continue to lose in court, including just yesterday over your move to illegally replace the U.S. Institute of Peace Leadership, and in recent cases over international broadcasting.

Now eventually, Mr. Secretary, you sent Congress notice of your intent to collapse the USAID into State. Only, you didn't consult with this Committee, that's required by law. It came without justification also required by law. And it came long after USAID was reduced to rubble. So sadly, disregard for our laws and values to me, has sort of become a pattern of your tenure. Revoking visas when someone writes an op-ed you don't like, or reaching a secret deal to use taxpayer dollars to jail U.S. residents in a notorious foreign prison, no due process, or pointlessly leaving food assistance to rot in storage.

Actually, in Dubai, we now have 500 tons of high energy biscuits that expire in July. They're bought, they're shipped, they're stored, all at taxpayer expense. But you've condemned them to waste and that is one example of many. Now, another pattern that I'm deeply

worried about is transparency. We have pressed you for information. Our staffs have sent you countless emails and briefing requests so we can do our job here.

There are hundreds of unanswered requests and no effort to address them. And Mr. Secretary, that's got to change even your plan to reorganize the State Department came with no information on the 270 offices you are moving to eliminate, the proposed layoffs, or how USAID will be merged into State. I won't ask you whether impounding billions of dollars is legal. It's not. I won't to ask you whether it's efficient to pay people not to work or fire them without determining staffing needs. And I won't ask you if cutting 91 percent of our counter narcotic and law enforcement programs make a safer, abruptly abandoning agreements with allies makes us stronger, or ceding our global leadership to China makes us more prosperous. Of course not. We know that.

We have worked together for years in a bipartisan way to advance U.S. interests and fund those programs. So with respect to my colleagues, how long are we going to sit here and watch this silently? Are we going to roll over as Trump tramples our laws and undermines our U.S. leadership, burns down what we have spent decades building, and let millions of people across our globes suffer and die? Or are we going to stand up, push back, assert our constitutional power of the purse?

And to my colleagues on both sides, this is the moment to decide whether this Committee continues to be a powerful bipartisan force. A force that I think we've all been proud of for a very long time. A force that is focused on safety and economic strength and national security, focused on looting the world in research and development, and countering China and others with our soft power and our military power.

Every single Member of this Committee knows what we are risking by letting this administration tear down so much. On USAID and other programs, we can always talk about how we can make things work better and other reforms. I don't think any of us are opposed to any of those considerations. We have been doing that in a bipartisan way for a long time, but that's not actually what Trump's fiscal year 2026 budget proposes. Mr. Secretary, I know you would like to give a 5-minute speech back to me, but I only have a few seconds left and I do need some information from you.

As I said, we have asked and have not gotten, can you tell me, will you share the text and details with my staff of your agreement with El Salvador and any other similar agents, including the funding details that we need to have?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, first, I'd like to respond to your 7-minute speech, which is primarily, I disagree, like 99 percent of it. It's just not true. We've done nothing that's illegal. We've been in——

Senator MURRAY. Well, the courts have disagreed with you.

Secretary RUBIO [continuing]. Over 600 briefings to Congress, we've asked questions, we've answered questions repeatedly. We get hundreds of questions a day, we respond to them as quickly as possible. And your characterization of the rules we made are false.

Senator MURRAY. Mr. Secretary, I tell you we are here because we need the information so that we can write our budget and on a bipartisan——

Secretary RUBIO. You'll have the information you need to write a budget.

Senator MURRAY. So, will we get the details on the El Salvador arrangement, yes or no?

Secretary RUBIO. Which Salvador arrangement?

Senator MURRAY. Your agreement that you've made with them about——

Secretary RUBIO. What agreement? The President of El Salvador agreed to take in 250 gang bangers and we sent them.

Senator MURRAY. My understanding is there's funding details we have not gotten, we need to see what the costs are there.

Secretary RUBIO. Well, we haven't funded that. We've provided them law enforcement assistance. I know, you just claim that we cut all this law enforcement assistance. We provided El Salvador and other countries law enforcement assistance. They have the right to spend that money anyway they wish, but they did us a big favor, they took 250 dangerous trained—we didn't deport any U.S. residents. No U.S. resident can——

Senator MURRAY. I'm not going to argue with you in that——

Secretary RUBIO. We're not in an argument. But don't say deported U.S. residents because we didn't. I don't deport anybody.

Senator MURRAY. I'm not asking——

Secretary RUBIO. But we didn't deport residents.

Senator MURRAY. I'm asking you whether we can see the details of the arrangements, including the funding details as the Appropriations Committee.

Secretary RUBIO. I'm giving you the details. The arrangements are we provide law enforcement funding to El Salvador among other countries. How they choose to spend that money internally is up to them.

Senator MURRAY. I think that's a no.

Secretary RUBIO. But I can tell you——

Senator MURRAY. Can you give me the details on the 200-plus offices you're proposing to eliminate?

Secretary RUBIO. Sure. We provided that.

Senator MURRAY. We need that. Can I get your commitment to give it to us?

Secretary RUBIO. Sure. It's part of our reorg.

Senator MURRAY. How about the details and justifications of your proposed rescissions from programs you claim are out of alignment with administration priorities? Are we going to get the details of that? Funding priorities.

Secretary RUBIO. On rescissions and empowerment and things of this nature, that's obviously an OMB function, and I would talk to them about that in regard to what's going to go on with that money. I can tell you the contracts we canceled, and I can list to you the contracts we canceled and the rationale why, because I went through——

Senator MURRAY. You get those to us like today, so we make——

Secretary RUBIO. The contracts?

Senator MURRAY. Yes. And the funding arrangements that you've made, that's what I'm asking for.

Secretary RUBIO. Funding arrangements with who?

Senator MURRAY. For any of the rescissions, for any of the funding, for any of the multiple congressional directives that you have given out so that we as an Appropriations Committee can make our funding decisions.

Secretary RUBIO. Sure. You're going to have all that information when you put together a budget.

Senator MURRAY. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. I enjoyed that. So, to my friends on the other side, I've been very supportive of this account, but USAID has collapsed, and if you look for somebody blame, look in the mirror. Look at Samantha Power. I've taken political fire like most of us have on our side for trying to be involved in the world. But here's what USAID did that led to what he's doing.

$70,000 grant for DEI musical production in Ireland, $69,000 for dance classes in Wuhan, China, $47,000 grant for transgender opera in Columbia. You screwed it up. You took the goodwill of people over here and you pissed it away because you turned over the keys to the kingdom to a bunch of crazy liberals. I can go on. $2.5 million for electric vehicles in Vietnam. $2 million for Moroccan pottery classes and promotion, $2 million for sex changes in LGBT activism in Guatemala.

No more from you. None. The reason this thing is dead and never coming back is because what you did, the Democratic Party did.

Senator MULLIN. You want me to follow that?

Senator GRAHAM. As you wish.

Senator MULLIN. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. You know, during your confirmation hearing, you stated, "Preventing crisis is a lot cheaper and a lot better than dealing with a crisis after the fact." Which I agree whole heartedly. In 2021, the State Department's budget was roughly $41 billion.

Today at 2025, the budget is almost double to $81.67 billion. Is our world safer over the last 4 years than it was when Trump was first in office?

Secretary RUBIO. Is it safer today than it was——

Senator MULLIN. No, no. Before Trump came back, the last 4 years underneath Biden's administration, the State Department almost doubled in their appropriated funds.

Secretary RUBIO. Well, I think——

Senator MULLIN. During only those 4 years did we become a safer Nation? Did the world become safer?

Secretary RUBIO. No, I don't think during the—I think the last 4 years the world has become more destabilized. Assign blame where you want to, but the world is less stable. We have an all out conflict that at any given moment threatens to spiral into a broader one in the Middle East. We have the Russia-Ukraine War that started in 2022 and has continued to this present day. We've shown Russia—I'm sorry, China is becoming increasingly aggressive in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the South China Sea against both the Philippines, Taiwan, and other claimants in the region.

So yes, and by the way, we experienced a mass migration crisis, not just here in the Western hemisphere, but also because of what's happened in Africa and the Middle East and Europe. So for all those reasons, no, we're not safer.

Senator MULLIN. So, it's safe to say that we threw money at it and it didn't help. And so now that we're trying to get it back under control, for some reason the Democrats are throwing an absolute, as I would say, a ringtail fit because we're doing better with the money we sent? There's no room to cut? We doubled the budget in 4 years and we have wars upon wars and rumors on rumors of wars. We have Haiti. That's absolutely a crap show. We have China that has increased their influence all around our borders.

And I mean literally, if you start looking at their influence in Canada and Mexico and all over central and South America, it hasn't worked. We have Africa that is complete mess. We have a war going on in Ukraine. I'm sure that, you know, that wouldn't have happened if we actually had strong leadership there. We have a war going on in Israel and what have we done? We've thrown money at what?

Going back to the Chairman's point of view about USAID $73 million spent on DEI. $73 million spent on DEI last year, because it made us safer? Are we serious? I mean, we have a $37 trillion debt. When are we going to start cutting? At what area are we going to start cutting and now all of a sudden we're trying to actually make changes and refocus on mission statement?

Sir, I appreciate what you're trying to do. Can you walk me through what your end goal is?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, first of all, the aid portion of it, these are some of the contracts we canceled. I can't go through all of them and people can say what they want, but some of them make no sense to me.

Senator MULLIN. I'd say a lot of them makes no sense.

Secretary RUBIO. Well, I mean, for example, $32 million to the Prague Civil Society Center. I don't know what that is. I mean, obviously we looked at the contract and we didn't approve it, but it didn't make a lot of sense to me. $14 million for improving public procurement in Serbia. I'm sure that improving public procurement in Serbia is not—maybe it's a really good thing, but I don't know if that's in our national interest to put that kind of money into that. And that's the kinds of programs that we're talking about.

It's not all the outrageous things. There are other things that are involved in this that you look at and say, okay, well maybe this is a worthy program, but not for us. It's not something that we should be—$1.5 million for voter confidence in Liberia. $14 million for social cohesion in Mali. $2.5 million for inclusive democracies in Southern Africa. $47 million for something called improving learning outcomes in Asia.

Again, these things sound really good, I guess. I mean, there's noble causes, but can we continue to afford to prioritize these sorts of projects when we have so many other needs, both domestically and abroad? And so our hope is to bring about some sanity to how this money is spent. So when people say we're still spending more money than anybody in the world on foreign aid, but it is being directed in a way that makes sense. It's actually furthering our national interest.

And that's what we hope to be able to do. And that's really the end goal here. It's not so much a cutting exercise. There may be savings involved, but the more important thing is that we get bet-

ter outcomes from it. That we feel like our foreign aid and our giving is aligned with our foreign policy objectives in a specific region, in a specific country.

Senator MULLIN. Yes, I think you said it best, national security interest, and words that my colleagues from the other side wouldn't like to hear, but America first. Is it in our interest or is it not in our interest? And we're throwing so much wasteful taxpayer dollars out the door that even the taxpayers on accountability, and which they should.

And that is what this administration is bringing. And that's what you are bringing. Now, you know, actually, I don't know if my time's almost up or not because everybody's been going way over.

Senator GRAHAM. It is.

Senator MULLIN. No, everybody else has been going way over. I just want to say, what's the difference between a visa and LPR?

Secretary RUBIO. An LPR is someone who's admitted into the country——

Senator MULLIN. A legal permanent residence?

Secretary RUBIO. Right.

Senator MULLIN. And a visa is what?

Secretary RUBIO. A visa is a guest.

Senator MULLIN. A guest, right? They're treated a little bit different underneath.

Secretary RUBIO. Well, they're actually treated different from the very beginning because we deny visas every day, all over the world for all kinds of reasons. But I guess there's this attitude that once you get a visa, now you've been enshrined with sort of privilege that is irrevocable. And the truth of matter is we should be able to—we will continue to—if you are going to do things that way we knew you were going to do it we wouldn't let you in this country, if you do it once you're here, we're going to take away the visa.

Senator MULLIN. You're a guest. That's right. One thing I want to add is I have a special interest in Haiti. My family and our companies prior to me getting into Congress and after coming into Congress have and invested a lot into missions throughout Haiti. And it's becoming a failed state. I would really like to work with your office and seeing how we can assist through individuals that we have contacts with, with ways that we might be able to assist on going forward and putting hopefully the right people in place.

I've literally spent years dealing with Haiti and I hate to say it's a failed state, but it will be. And who's going to backfill that? It's going to be China. And so we'd really like to work with you moving forward on that, sir.

Secretary RUBIO. Absolutely.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. I agree Senator Mullin, we don't talk enough about Haiti. It's in our backyard and that it's not becoming a failed state, it is a failed State. Senator Durbin.

Senator DURBIN. Thank you, Senator Graham. Let me personally thank you for your leadership on this subcommittee. We may disagree on some things and some projects, but I believe you've been honest in working with us in the past, and I look forward to that continuing. Mr. Secretary, it's good to see you. 99 to nothing. It's pretty good score coming out of the Senate.

I'd like to ask you about Gaza, if I can. They anticipate a famine is underway in Gaza. In the next few days, they anticipate 14,000 infants and children will die. Israel has decided to change its policy to release baby food into Gaza. I just have to ask you, as you must see the same pictures I do, you can't escape them, of these kids with pencil thin arms, with ribs you can count, spindly legs, wide eyes, who are just on the cusp of death because of the policy of Israel in dealing with Hamas.

Let me make it clear for the record. I support Israel. I believe what happened in October 7th was an act of terrorism, unforgivable act of terrorism and they have a right to defend themselves, period. Number two, I believe Hamas is a terrorist organization. I do not believe that every Palestinian in Gaza territory is a member of Hamas or sympathetic with that band of terrorists. Many of them are.

So today, three countries, France, United Kingdom and Canada made a statement, which I'd like to summarize, you probably already. They said the resumption of aid into Gaza by Israel, are wholly inadequate. United Kingdom, paused free trade talks with Israel and sanctioned Israeli settlers. And then this statement, joint message by these three countries, allies of the United States. "If Israel does not cease the renewed military offensive and lift its restrictions on humanitarian aid, we'll take further concrete action in response."

Mr. Secretary, are we on the wrong side of history in watching this unfold and not responding as these three countries have?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, we're not prepared to respond the way these countries have, but we are prepared to say as we have, and I think the Israelis in their statements today acknowledged, have engaged with our Israeli partners over the weekend in the last few days about the need to resume humanitarian aid. We anticipate that those flows will increase over the next few days and weeks. It's important that that be achieved.

I actually had an opportunity when I was in Rome on Sunday or Saturday to see Cindy McCain, as you know, is involved with the World Food Program, discussed their distribution systems. She outlined for me exactly how they would distribute food and how the program would work if it were to be restarted. So suffice it to say that, we support 100 percent the fact that there can be no future in Gaza for the people of Gaza as long as Hamas is around.

And by the way, in your comments that you made, I know many of you have noticed there's been growing number of anti-Hamas protest and demonstrations as well. So there are people there that understand that this is a root cause of it. That said, you have this acute immediate challenge of food and aid not reaching people, and you have existing distribution systems that could get them there.

So we have—and continue to work, even though I've been here in hearings all week, all day, continue to work with our Israeli partners to—and as I think they've acknowledged in the statement today that they've heard from us to allow more aid in because I believe they can achieve their objective of defeating Hamas while still allowing aid to enter in sufficient quantities.

Senator DURBIN. I agree with you. I think what you just said should be our policy, but I don't think we should use these people,

these Palestinians, particularly these children as just a casualty of war. This is a designed attack by Israel and to Gaza. This is a designed decision by Israel not to provide humanitarian aid, food, medicine, water, and we provide quite a bit of money to Israel for its own defense and for other purposes.

Shouldn't we be more forthcoming to speak out about this humanitarian crisis?

Secretary RUBIO. Yes, I think there's two things that Israel has expressed, and I don't want to speak for them because they speak often on this topic. The first is there are complaints that humanitarian aid is often stolen and siphoned off by the mass elements.

Senator DURBIN. Do you think it has?

Secretary RUBIO. There's no doubt that there has happened. That said, the question is whether it has to be—the question is, is there a way to reliably reach as many people as possible and prevent the humanitarian crisis you're describing while not enriching Hamas or providing Hamas relief. And we believe there is a way to do it, and we want to be supportive of that way to do it. And we've encouraged them to do it in that way, and we think we've made progress.

Senator DURBIN. Did you ask Cindy McCain whether Hamas was diverting food supplies from the people in Gaza?

Secretary RUBIO. We didn't discuss that. We talked mostly about, I wanted to get a description of what the distribution points look like. How can you get assistance to the most number of people as quickly as possible in an orderly way based on where they live and where they are in different parts of Gaza.

Senator DURBIN. Is this an emergency or a humanitarian situation in your view?

Secretary RUBIO. Yes, I mean, ultimately, I think we all see the same images. The question that I had in my mind in meeting with her and discussing is, do we have the mechanisms in place to quickly start if in fact an agreement could be reached to allow humanitarian aid to flow? Did we have the mechanics in place to allow the World Food Program and their contractors to go in and immediately begin to provide it? And she assured me that they do, that they could.

Because one of the arguments or one of the concerns that existed is that the organizations that could do the distribution we're not on the ground and we're not capable of starting so quickly. She assured us that there were.

Senator DURBIN. If we have this in place, what are we waiting for? These children are dying.

Secretary RUBIO. Well, it's my understanding—again, I've been here all day, but it's my understanding that starting yesterday and moving through the next few days, aid will increasingly flow in and hopefully that will allow these programs to work.

Senator DURBIN. I certainly hope so too. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Senator Durbin. Senator Boozman. Oh, by the way, today is Cindy McCain's birthday. Happy birthday, Cindy, wherever you may be.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's good to have you Mr. Secretary. We're very proud of you, but we do miss having you around very much. I'm want to follow up a little bit about some

of the path that Senator Moran was going down about food aid and the process of reworking the programs. Could you speak to how the State Department is coordinating with other agencies like USDA regarding setting up a new foreign assistance framework? And can you also speak, I know you're being very, very supportive of the American farmer, as is the President, how that this can enhance American farmers' markets?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, first of all, and I think this Committee probably understand that, but others perhaps don't fully appreciate. We actually do foreign aid across multiple agencies as well. So USDA does some, HHS does some, so there are other agencies that do. So that's a process we intend to look at and see if there's some duplication there that we can avoid and perhaps increase our efficiency in regards to delivering services.

In the case of food aid in particular, you know, Secretary Rollins, we've been in touch with her team, and obviously we've done a lot of reform and a lot of change over the last few months. So this is one that is a little further behind. But I think the intent is to find a way there that we can leverage what USAID's already doing—USDA is already doing to enhance how we provide food assistance around the world in a way that benefits the American farmer, but also fulfills our desire to provide assistance around the world where needed and where it furthers our national interest.

Senator BOOZMAN. Good. Very good. Let me talk to you a little bit about the Fulbright program, and the Fulbright alumni, 44 Fulbright alumni have served as heads of certain governments, 89 foreign governments, contribute over $90 million annually. I know in my travels and you're traveling so extensively now and have been for many, many years it seems like every time that you're in a foreign country and you're visiting with the cabinet members, you know, half of them are Fulbright scholars and they're very, very proud of it.

Forty-nine governments' metrics exceed the U.S. government's annual contribution. I guess the question is, would you be willing to work with us to find a solution that strengthens the program and yet fits into today's challenges, which are different than they have been in the past, but the opportunity for the leadership of these other countries across the ranks to have them such that they're very, very familiar with the United States in that way, I think is really invaluable.

Secretary RUBIO. And I think that's necessarily going to be a part of our process. As you know, we were at the beginning of this appropriations process going into the new year, we have a submission we've made to you a preliminary submission. Obviously, I served here long enough to know that you'll have your own set of ideas about what the priorities should be and what we should be looking to do.

And we understand that, and we'll work very closely with you on those priorities because in the end, we'll tell you what we need in order to run our agency, and then you'll tell us what we need as well. That's the way it worked in the 15 years I was here, 16. I imagine that's the way it'll continue to work. I do think ultimately, we want to do is share the same goal.

And we owe you that document as a starting point and I wanted to interlace it with the org chart. Again, I know some people don't want to talk about reorganization, but I do think they're intertwined and they're deeply important. Not that they don't want to talk about it, but they want to separate one from the other. But look, we're going to be engaged with you in this appropriations process because I think it's beneficial to us, but also because we have to, because ultimately, you'll write that. And I mean, I think the department will be stronger if you can pass an appropriations bill and get it to the other house and have it signed by the President. We want you to be able to pass an appropriations bill.

Senator BOOZMAN. Yes, very much. One of the things in traveling, you know, you're there, you get the in-country team briefing and stuff, and you just wondering, you know, what the State department's doing to further U.S. economic interest including advocating for U.S. businesses abroad. Can you tell us kind of what your ideas are in that regard?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, it's a mission that we have in this re organization. The economics team will really focus on it, but it is a mission. We have to try to connect American companies to business opportunities abroad. And in many of the countries around the world where you go to, particularly those that are developing, maybe not underdeveloped, but developing countries, they seek American expertise.

Where we have seen barriers to entry in some countries that manifest in one of two ways. The first is, frankly, there are countries that are open to American investment, but they don't have a strong rule of law. By that I mean you can sign a contract with them, but if a month later someone else's cousin gets elected judge or mayor, someone will come knocking on your door and saying, this business no longer belongs to you, it belongs to us.

So there's that sense. In some cases, it's security. They just feel that there's not enough security in the country for them to make long term investments. And in other cases, frankly, there are things are, you know, we have competitors that bribe foreign officials. We lose business opportunities because someone shows up with a bag of cash and that's unlawful and illegal for an American business to do.

That said, we're constantly looking for opportunities where American expertise and provide resources. One of the others we're seeing a lot of that now is in the mining of rare earth minerals, where multiple countries are lining up to invite American companies to come in and do that sort of mining in an ecologically responsible way, not in a destructive way to their natural environment. We think that's a huge opportunity as well for the U.S.

And again, we want that going back as it's a broken record, but these are the kinds of opportunities that are driven from the local level up. When you get these cables saying the local government or local economy is looking for greater U.S. investment in this sector, it allows us to partner with companies here that are looking for expansion abroad and hopefully create those opportunities for them.

Senator BOOZMAN. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I ask my questions, I want to go back to your characterization of USAID and the Democrats responsibility for what happened with that program. I think you've heard from virtually every person who has talked today, and we certainly heard this this morning in terms of the Foreign Relations Committee, that if there were improprieties in USAID, then we were on board with addressing those, and we were on board with making changes to make sure that didn't happen again.

But the concern is the wholesale throwing out of the foreign assistance programs for the 0.3 percent of grants that we agree maybe should never have been made. A number of them are things that never happened. They've been made up just like President Trump's reference to transgender mice in his state of the state address. That's not what happened.

He was talking about transgenic mice, which are used in cancer experiments, not transgender mice. So I think we would all be better served if we tried to work together to address the challenges of providing foreign assistance in a way that, as Secretary Rubio has said, and I think most of us have agreed with, makes it more effective and better. And I'm not sure that the chainsaw that Elon Musk took to USAID makes it better on its face.

And we can disagree about that, and I'm sure we will, because we may have different views and I, for one, don't appreciate Senator Mullen suggesting that, because I may have a different view on how foreign assistant should be operated, that I'm less of a patriot and don't believe in the security of this country.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would hope that we could dispense with the name calling in the future. And I agree, you've been a great defender of foreign assistance programs. I feel like I have too.

Senator GRAHAM. You have.

Senator SHAHEEN. So let's agree on that.

Senator GRAHAM. You have been, The only reason I did this, you've accused this man of killing 15 million people.

Senator SHAHEEN. I didn't accuse him. I think they quoted a report that suggested that because of changes to foreign assistance, that there would be significant numbers of people killed. I don't blame Senator Rubio for that. I think, but I do blame the policy changes for the devastating impact they will have on people across the world. And I hope that we can fix those and that we are all committed to doing that.

Senator GRAHAM. I'll give you another minute because I interrupted you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Okay. Well, let me go back to the question that I asked this morning, Senator Rubio, which has to do with Ukraine, because we were talking about sanctions and one of the things you pointed out is that the Trump administration has left in place the sanctions on Russia. Today, the EU and the UK impose sweeping new sanctions on Russia, including targeting close to 200 vessels in Moscow shadow fleet.

But we haven't seen our sanctions change to address the changes that Moscow has been able to make in response to the sanctions regime that we've put on. So the question is, and I asked you this

this morning, Senator Graham and Blumenthal have a bill that has 80 Senate sponsors on it that would put in place secondary sanctions on Russia because of its continued failure to come to the negotiating table to really look at how to end the war in Ukraine.

Is this legislation that you or the Trump administration or the White House would support?

Secretary RUBIO. Well, the legislation we're most certainly aware of. I'm not today in a position to tell you we're going to endorse it or support it at this time. And I'll explain why. We want to continue to play the role where we can speak to both sides of this conflict and get them to the table to end this war once and for all.

The President is fully aware, as he has reminded on numerous occasions, both in posts on social media and in public statements, he fully recognizes that he has options at his disposal. I can also tell you, and I believe you're personally aware along with Senator Graham, that we have warned the Russians for the better part of 2 months that the Senate is working on a package which is far more severe than anything the President could impose under his own authority in many cases.

And that eventually, if progress isn't made, people are going to give us some time to work this out. But if that didn't work out after a while, there was nothing—that was going to happen. This was going to come. So we're aware of that. Suffice it to say that we are still hopeful, although at the same time, realistic, but hopeful with our eyes wide open, that we can reach a point here where we can begin even the process of negotiating this. We spent a lot of time on this. We've met with both sides far more with the Ukrainians than with the Russians. We've had two technical talks with the Russians in the past. One high level engagement. The President's spoken to the Putin three times. We've spoken to the Ukrainians far more.

So what we're expecting now, based on the President's phone conversation yesterday and my conversations over the weekend with Mr. Lavrov is that at some point here, fairly soon, maybe in a number of days, maybe this week, hopefully, the Russian side is going to present terms that they would want to see, just broad terms that would allow us to move towards the ceasefire. And that ceasefire would then allow us to enter into—they to enter into detailed negotiations to bring about an end of the conflict.

We're hoping that will happen. We believe that the term sheet that the Russians produce will tell us a lot about their true intentions. If it's a term sheet that's realistic and you can work off of it, that's one thing. If it makes demands that we know are unrealistic, I think that will be indicative, and what the President will decide to do at that point, I can't speak for him at this moment, I'm not prepared to say, but I think we all know he's aware of both his authorities to sanction and he is well aware of the fact that this bill is moving in the Senate.

And it's one of the reasons why I asked Senator Graham to join me in Turkey to when we engaged the night you arrived with our Ukrainian partners as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. I appreciate that. I appreciate the fact that you have talked more to the Ukrainians. And yet this morning when we talked about continued assistance to Ukraine, you said

that nothing had been done to cut that assistance. But you have cut energy assistance that's necessary for repairing their electric grid after missile attacks and keeping electricity flowing. I've visited some of those electric grids, so I know how critical they are.

You've cut assistance to help Ukrainians document, verify, and report on war crimes to allow them to 1 day hold perpetrators accountable. Again, I've had the opportunity to meet with some of those folks who were in the process of documenting the atrocities that have occurred. You've cut cost free cooperation with international bodies that are tracking kidnapped Ukrainian children. You've got assistance to strengthen security sector oversight, which is helpful to us as we make sure that the Ukrainians are spending funds that we have provided them appropriately.

So in my mind, that doesn't mean that this administration has continued assistance to Ukraine. It means that you've cut assistance to Ukraine and in many areas, the ones I just outlined. And so again, if we're going to see a dynamic change in these negotiations and to get legitimate peace negotiations going on, then we've got to put more pressure on Russia. And so far the administration has not been willing to do that.

Secretary RUBIO. Well, I don't agree we haven't put pressure on Russia, as we continue to insist upon them coming to the table. For example, they agreed, albeit less than ideal direct talks for the first time in 3 years, occurred this weekend in Turkey. For the first time in multiple years since at least 2022, Russia have agreed to release documentation. Now, it may not lead to anything, and at some point you may wind up right at the point you're pointing to the President's just not prepared to close the door on that yet because he still hopes to achieve peace.

Senator SHAHEEN. But let me just clarify. My understanding is that President Trump offered to go to Turkey to meet with President Zelensky and with Vladimir Putin. President Zelensky went, Vladimir Putin refused to go and basically dissed the President's willingness to go to meet with them in person.

Secretary RUBIO. I think the President——

Senator SHAHEEN. That was certainly what was reported.

Secretary RUBIO. Yes, but I was on that trip. I think the President expressed, yes, so there was going to be a meeting between Zelensky and Putin. I'm more than willing to go, but there wasn't going to be one. Putin never agreed to a meeting with Zelensky.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right, so the President was willing to go, but Vladimir Putin wasn't. That in my mind means that Putin—while the President may be willing to negotiate and may be willing to sit at the table, Vladimir Putin is not. Because it's in his interest, he believes it's in Russia's interest to carry this war out as long as possible because he thinks that Russia benefits from that. Until we change the dynamic, that's what he's going to continue to do.

Secretary RUBIO. Well again, that may very well be what he believes at some point in time and his actions will tell. But I think the President wants to exhaust every opportunity to bring about a peaceful negotiation here, an end to this conflict as soon as possible. And I think we should be happy that we have a President that wants to end the war and that he's, you know, it's taxing on

the patience and it's taken a long time, but the 4 months has been dedicated to this.

But ultimately, I think it's a good thing that we have a President that's trying to end this war. He wants to give it every available chance possible and doesn't want to foreclose anything too early. If there's still a chance to achieve peace, he wants to make that happen.

Senator SHAHEEN. I'm not disagreeing with that. I think I agree. I think we should try and end this war. I'm just questioning his tactics and whether he's really being successful in the way he's doing this.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to enter for the record a fact sheet that it's called the PRC Supporting International Assistance as U.S. Withdraws. It's dated April 29th, 2025. And what it lays out is specific examples of where the PRC has come in and taken over U.S. assistance programs as we've withdrawn.

Senator GRAHAM. Without objection.

[The PRC Assistance Fact Sheet follows:]

U.S. SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE DEMOCRATS

FACT SHEET: The PRC Supporting International Assistance as U.S. Withdraws

April 29, 2025

UPDATES

- President Trump fired USAID workers while they were in the field to assist in rescue and recovery in the wake of Burma's massive earthquake. Meanwhile, the PRC sent 82 disaster rescue teams and emergency supplies, including $13.8 million in aid. Beijing widely broadcast its efforts, creating a positive reaction on social media within Burma.
- Earlier this month, General Michael Langley, the commander of U.S. Africa Command, stated the PRC is "trying to replicate" specific USAID programs in Africa that the Trump administration cut, including PEPFAR.
- The PRC Ministry of Finance proposed raising the PRC's "diplomatic endeavors" budget by 8.4% in 2025, significantly higher than the 6.6% increase in 2024. In addition to its Belt and Road Initiative, China is marketing its increased development funding through its "Small and Beautiful" projects as an alternative to USAID.
- The State Department has paused funding for the Countering People's Republic of China Influence Fund (CPIF) and significantly reduced staffing for the Office for the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), which mobilizes investments in developing and emerging economies.

TALKING POINTS

- As America retreats from the world under President Trump, China is eagerly filling the void. Trump and Elon Musk's chaotic and indiscriminate cuts to key global programs and erratic tariff policies have weakened America abroad – alienating close allies, shredding key tools of soft power and creating real doubt that America can be trusted as a partner and positioning China as a viable alternative.
- Trump's retreat has consequences for America's security and prosperity. In the Indo-Pacific, cuts are jeopardizing our ability to maintain strategic military bases and project American power. In sub-Saharan Africa, China is boxing out American firms' ability to compete for consumers in fast growing markets. Across the world, when Trump pulls back, China gets a leg up in securing access to the critical minerals that are the lifeblood of the 21st century global economy.
- Long-standing bipartisan priorities, including the U.S. Agency for Global Media and its arms like Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia have been brought to a complete halt. These outlets play a huge role – at a modest cost – in reaching audiences yearning for freedom in places like Iran and North Korea. And they allow us to combat Chinese and Russian propaganda from outlets like RT, Xinhua and the Global Times.
- U.S. foreign assistance is a great return on investment for America – for our military, workers and exports. As President Trump's own first defense secretary said – when you don't fund diplomats, the Pentagon needs to buy more ammunition. And when America steps back, China and other adversaries are only too happy to take our place. If the Trump Administration truly believes we've returned to an era of great power competition, conceding the playing field to China will harm American for generations to come.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE EXAMPLES

Pacific Islands Undersea Cables: The Administration terminated a USAID project that supported the installment of an undersea cable spur in Palau. The project was scheduled to be completed by the end of this year but is now likely delayed. Developing trusted, secure telecommunications is vital for U.S. military personnel and businesses competing with PRC entities in the region.

Pacific Islands Climate: The Administration has halted all climate resilience and disaster relief programming for Pacific Island countries, who consistently cite climate change as their number one security threat. In the meantime, Beijing recently signed a 5-year comprehensive strategic partnership action plan with the Cook Islands covering infrastructure, maritime cooperation, tourism and other sectors.

Radio Free Asia and Voice of America: Trusted sources report that numerous countries with U.S. security partnerships in the Indo Pacific have immediately switched to Xinhua programming in the wake of the Administration's termination of VOA and RFA. Meanwhile, Chinese broadcasters have taken over frequencies the U.S. left behind, and FM radio equipment has begun arriving at radio stations across Africa.

Ukraine: China's foreign aid and international development agency stated China will continue to provide assistance, which also includes participation in the future reconstruction of Ukraine.

Africa Global Health: On February 24, China and South Korea sent $4 million to Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to plug some of the immediate health funding gaps left by terminated U.S. assistance. Undoubtedly, the PRC will work to advance their bio research capabilities with the recent exit of the United States in the global health sector.

Angola-Tanzania-Zambia: On March 20, the Trump administration froze a $553 million project through the Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to develop the Lobito Corridor—a strategic investment in our critical mineral supply chains—while the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation has an ongoing $1.4 billion project to upgrade the Tanzania-Zambia railway to improve copper exports from central Africa. This development would come with a 30-year concession for PRC rail access. With DFC funds for the Lobito Corridor frozen, railway and port investors will need to look for other investors, like the PRC.

Angola: While threatening to take over Greenland and coercing Ukraine into sharing its critical mineral profits, the Trump Administration has terminated a contract to search for critical minerals in Angola with the U.S. Geological Survey. China continues to be the leading actor in the critical minerals space in Africa.

Nigeria: The Export and Import Bank of China and UNICEF recently signed an MOU committing support for water, sanitation and hygiene services for vulnerable children and families. This programming was previously supported by USAID. On April 18th, PRC Ambassador to Nigeria detailed how U.S. tariffs create an opportunity for the PRC to deepen its cooperation with Nigeria. The PRC is already Nigeria's largest bilateral trading partner. Further, funding through the State Department to support efforts to counter illicit mining and wildlife trafficking (areas that the Chinese exploit in Africa) has been terminated.

Uganda: On March 27, in coordination with the World Food Program, the PRC donated $2 million in rice to Uganda to help feed vulnerable communities in Karamoja and school-going children. This project was previously supported by USAID.

Gaza: After the Administration terminated essentially all assistance to Gaza, the PRC announced it would provide new humanitarian aid, pledging food packages for 60,000 families.

Cambodia: After the U.S. terminated $2 million in demining programming in Cambodia, the PRC immediately announced $4.4 million of its own demining programs. The PRC also recently stepped in to fund child literacy and nutrition programs previously supported by USAID.

Nepal: The Trump administration cancelled all but one program in Nepal which monitors for food insecurity. The PRC has begun health services programs in Nepal, and PRC officials have stated they are willing to replace USAID programs with funding of their own.

Dominican Republic: On January 22, within days of President Trump's executive order on foreign assistance, the PRC donated 120 ambulances to the Dominican Republic.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Britt is on her way, if you can just hang in there a few more minutes. It's been a long day, you've done a terrific job in my view.

Let me just, what you said the last 5 or 6 minutes has been really—I think put a fine point on what we're trying to do here. Count me in for ending war peacefully, honorably, and justly. I think President Trump, above all others has the ability to do that because quite frankly, I think he's the one guy that Putin probably does not want cross.

Senator Shaheen's point, I share her concerns in this regard. President Trump called for a ceasefire, Ukraine said, yes, Putin's making excuses. He said, go to Istanbul, Zelensky went, Putin didn't. Having said all that, you've described a process that's very clear to me. In the coming days, not weeks, Russia will give us a term sheet of what they need to get to a ceasefire and we'll have some indication of how serious they are.

I think that's a good thing Marco, that we're now getting them to put up their terms for a ceasefire. And after they do that, I'll be glad to talk to you and get your view of what this means and I'll share my view. The fact that you invited me to Turkey, I appreciated that. You took a member of the Senate and I was at every meeting, and Secretary Rubio wanted people to hear the way our system works. And you, quite frankly, my friend, have really gone the extra mile of trying to bring this coalition together, give Russia the space that needs to get to yes.

I'm not out to humiliate Putin. I'm no fan of his. I understand that we want to get this war over, but in the next few days we'll have some indication of how serious he is. I promise you we're over 80 now. If the next few days is like the last months, then you can just count on us moving, because I think it's our job to try to help the world end this war.

The Chinese are watching, this is a dress rehearsal for Taiwan. How this ends, I think, will determine greatly what happens to the future of Taiwan. I want this war to end in a way that Xi thinks, "Well, that didn't work out too well for Putin." Again, I'm not out to humiliate Russia, but I am out to make sure the war ends in a way not to start new wars. Afghanistan was a disaster. If we do not get this right in Ukraine and the world perceives that Putin got away with it, that will be even worse. That will be worse than Afghanistan.

So, I have every confidence we're not going to let that happen. I have every confidence in Secretary Rubio, I have seen him in action. And I tell you, the way he interacted with his colleagues in NATO was just masterful. And I appreciate being part of that trip.

And what you're doing in Syria, we don't talk enough about it. Could be a game changer. Because you're right, if we don't do something in a matter of weeks or months, the place will become ungoverned and we'll have another Al-Qaeda, ISIS recruiting camp in the Middle East. So, count me in for wanting to help you on sanctions.

Do we know where Senator Britt's at? All right, she had her chance. She's great, she's working hard, you've been here all day. Thank you so much.

As we have in past Subcommittee hearings, I ask that statements from the Department of State and USAID Offices of Inspector Generals be made part of the record.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ARNE B. BAKER, ACTING INSPECTOR GENERAL, OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for this hearing on the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of State. I am honored to serve as the Acting Inspector General at the U.S. Depart-

ment of State (Department) Office of Inspector General (OIG) and privileged to share with you today the work of OIG and its dedicated staff.

OIG inspects embassies and diplomatic posts throughout the world to determine whether policy goals are being achieved and whether the interests of the United States are being represented and advanced. OIG performs specialized security inspections and audits in support of the Department's mission to provide effective protection to U.S. personnel, facilities, and sensitive information. OIG also audits Department operations and activities to ensure that they are as effective and efficient as possible. Finally, OIG investigates instances of fraud, waste, and mismanagement that may constitute either criminal wrongdoing or violations of Department regulations. In short, OIG plays a crucial role in overseeing the funds Congress appropriates to the Department for its many programs and activities and we believe that our work can play an important role in assisting Subcommittee Members with funding decisions.

This hearing comes at a fluid and potentially transformative time for the Department and the broader foreign affairs community. The proposed restructuring and reform efforts underway, including the absorption of select foreign assistance activities previously administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), involve complex challenges and billions of dollars of programs and operations. We are moving swiftly to leverage our extensive institutional knowledge and expertise to provide both Congress and the Department with timely, reliable, and independent assessments to inform these efforts.

In this testimony, I will discuss our mission and results, major management challenges confronting the Department, and the ways we are adapting to meet our oversight mandate through our work planning and operational and resource management efforts.

MISSION AND RESULTS

OIG's mandate covers both Department and U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) programs and operations, which include more than 80,000 employees and 279 overseas missions and domestic entities. We also oversee the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, a Federal agency that operates under the foreign policy guidance of the Department. We oversee more than $89 billion in Department, USAGM, and foreign assistance resources. In the last five fiscal years, OIG identified approximately $1.7 billion in questioned costs and taxpayer funds that could be put to better use.

Since the start of the 2019 fiscal year, OIG's criminal, civil, and administrative investigations produced an additional $114 million in monetary results (including fines, restitution, and recoveries). Last month alone, OIG's Office of Investigations produced nearly $23 million in monetary results, including a guilty plea for embezzlement of more than $650,000;[1] false claims of $1,279,545 for fuel;[2] and $21 million for excessive, uncompetitive, and unsubstantiated charges by a contractor.[3]

Over the past 5 years, OIG's work yielded potential monetary benefits of approximately $4 for every $1 received in base appropriations. While this statistic demonstrates a sizable return on investment for the American taxpayer, it represents only a fraction of the contribution resulting from our oversight work. Our non-monetary findings and recommendations often result in improvements that are not quantifiable but are nonetheless vital. For example, our work related to safety and security frequently addresses critical threats to Department personnel, facilities, and information, helping to safeguard national security.

MAJOR MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Each year, OIG identifies the most significant management and performance challenges facing the Department and provides a brief assessment of the Department's progress in addressing those challenges. We determine challenges by taking a qualitative and holistic view, giving weight to systemic issues. In recent years, we have grouped challenges into three primary areas: safety and security, stewardship, and staffing and organizational structure.

The Department is in the process of executing significant, complex organizational and operational changes at a rapid pace. Plans and proposals include the elimi-

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[1] U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, Press Release: "Former State Department Budget Analyst Pleads Guilty to Embezzling More than $650,000" (April 30, 2025).

[2] OIG, *Monthly Update, April 2025* (May 15, 2025).

[3] U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, Press Release: "DynCorp Agrees to Pay $21 Million to Resolve False Claims Act Lawsuit Alleging Inflated Costs on State Department" (April 9, 2025).

nation of 15 percent of domestic staff, the closure and consolidation of more than 132 bureaus and offices, and the integration of specific USAID functions. Management challenges we identified are likely to impact the Department's ability to successfully implement these reform efforts, underscoring the need for both the Department and Congress to carefully consider OIG's relevant past recommendations.

Safety and Security

Safeguarding people, facilities, and property is a continual challenge for the Department. We consistently find health and safety concerns in our post inspections. Our inspection of the Department's Bureau of Medical Services identified a range of issues with implications for employee health and safety and noted, for example, that bureau's quality management procedures did not comply with healthcare industry standards requiring regular clinical performance reviews of medical providers.[4] Our inspections also note unique security issues facing posts operating in high-threat environments, such as those mentioned in our classified inspections of Embassy Moscow and Embassy Baghdad.[5]

Another important piece of recent work relates to the Department's facilities, which must meet physical security requirements that are meant to reduce risk and vulnerabilities and to protect personnel, property, and information. When overseas posts identify facilities that do not meet the relevant physical security requirements, they first seek ways to bring the facilities into compliance, but when this is not possible, the Department may grant a waiver or an exception. In FY 2024, OIG reviewed the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's processes for granting such waivers and exceptions and found that it did not have formal controls in place to ensure mitigations that were approved as part of a waiver or exception were implemented. We also found the bureau did not require some overseas posts to seek exceptions when facilities did not meet standards.[6]

The safety of diplomatic residences is also a concern. One example of such an issue comes from Embassy Dili, which is in a very high seismic risk area. We found the post did not conduct seismic safety assessments for all residences, which poses significant risk to the safety of occupants who could face injury or death in the event of an earthquake.[7]

In addition to the security of people and property, we have found persistent problems with information security. Our oversight of the Department's IT security program continues to identify numerous control weaknesses. The FY 2024 Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) audit concluded again that the Department did not have a fully implemented information security program based on evidence of security weaknesses identified in eight of nine domains, including risk management, configuration management, identity and access management, and security training. The information security standards that form the criteria for this audit represent foundational guidelines for managing and reducing cyber risk by protecting networks and data.[8] The Department's inability to comply with those standards creates significant risk. Our routine inspection work also frequently highlights IT security concerns across posts. Pervasive deficiencies include failures to develop and test contingency plans, test configuration changes prior to approval, ensure information systems security officers perform all required duties, and monitor and configure dedicated Internet networks.

In addition to comprehensive audits of the Department's information security programs, OIG examines information security and records management practices in critical threat environments overseas. In January, we found that Department guidance for preserving and protecting Signal messages used for official business was insufficient. According to both headquarters and field personnel, Department procedures for preserving Signal messages were burdensome and did not fully address the technical limitations and information security vulnerabilities that personnel encounter when they attempt to preserve them. We recommended that the Department assess the extent to which electronic messaging applications are being used and update its guidance, as appropriate.[9]

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[4] OIG, *Inspection of the Bureau of Medical Services* (ISP–I–24–08, December 2023).

[5] OIG, Classified Inspection of *Embassy Moscow, Russia* (ISP–S–25–02, January 2025); and Classified Inspection of Embassy Baghdad, Iraq (ISP–S–24–06, January 2024).

[6] OIG, *Review of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Physical Security Waivers and Exception Processes* (ISP–I–24–19, June 2024).

[7] OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Dili, Timor-Leste* (ISP–I–24–13, May 2024).

[8] OIG, *(U) Audit of the Department of State FY2024 Information Security Program* (AUD–IT–24–26, August 2024).

[9] OIG, *(U) Audit of U.S. Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine, Records Retention for Electronic Messaging* (AUD–GEER–25–10, January 2025).

Stewardship

Efficiently and effectively managing its significant resources is another long-standing challenge for the Department. OIG's work demonstrates that the Department could enhance its stewardship of taxpayer resources by improving its ability to identify and address weaknesses in financial and property management and oversight of its contractors and other implementers of its worldwide programs.

We have reported property management weaknesses in the Department's financial statements every year since FY 2005.[10] In FY 2024, the Department's internal control structure continued to exhibit several deficiencies that negatively affected the Department's ability to account for real and personal property in a complete, accurate, and timely manner. An independent contractor concluded that the combination of property-related control deficiencies was a significant deficiency. The individual deficiencies identified were related to overseas real property, construction projects, leases, personal property, and software. The audit also identified internal control deficiencies related to unliquidated obligations and financial reporting.[11]

Resource planning is also a source of concern. Our inspection of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs found that the bureau failed to account for sustainment costs that the Department is expected to cover in connection with large-scale Department of Defense security assistance program investments through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative.[12] We have also observed issues in planning for drawdowns and evacuations, which can be chaotic in high-threat security situations. In preparing for such drawdowns and evacuations, posts must consider how to safeguard, manage, and dispose of sensitive security assets to prevent them from falling into the hands of hostile forces. While individual posts have substantial experience responding to these situations, a recent OIG management assistance report found that the Department had not established a process to systematically review documented lessons learned or determine when lessons learned should necessitate changes to Department policies, procedures, or guidance. As a result, many of the same difficulties experienced by posts that underwent evacuations prior to 2021 were repeated during the evacuation of Embassy Kabul.[13]

The Department also faces challenges in properly overseeing its contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements. Those responsible for oversight of contractors and grantees must monitor and document performance, confirm work is done in accordance with agreed upon terms, address nonperformance, and ensure that costs are effectively contained. Again, our routine inspection work often highlights deficiencies in this area at the overseas post and bureau levels. During our audit related to the construction of a new Embassy compound in Mexico City, we found that the Department did not execute contract modifications for the construction contract in accordance with requirements. Specifically, the project director did not assess the impact that the contract modifications would have on the overall construction project timeline, the Department did not always perform required pre-negotiation and negotiation activities to determine fair and reasonable pricing, and the contracting officer did not always obtain required contractor release statements to avoid exposing the Department to increased financial risk.[14] In another report, OIG auditors examined contractor requests to change prices and timelines for overseas construction projects. Nearly half of the requests audited by OIG included work ordered outside of the scope of the contract, resulting in unauthorized cost commitments that were not properly ratified. Examining only five overseas construction projects, OIG found more than $4 million in unsupported and unallowable costs associated with these types of contractor requests.[15]

OIG has previously identified issues with the Department's approach to setting goals for, tracking, and monitoring foreign assistance, all of which will present challenges as it implements plans to take on more responsibility for the direct management and oversight of foreign assistance activities. In one prior report, OIG found that the Department did not sufficiently oversee foreign assistance funds transferred to other Federal agencies and intergovernmental organizations, and did not ensure that implementing partners performed monitoring and evaluation activities

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[10] OIG, *Audit of the U.S. Department of State 2005 and 2004 Principal Financial Statements* (AUD–FM–06–12, November 2005).

[11] OIG, *Audit of the U.S. Department of State 2005 and 2004 Principal Financial Statements* (AUD–FM–06–12, November 2005).

[12] OIG, *Inspection of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs* (ISP–I–24–16, September 2024).

[13] OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan, and Kyiv, Ukraine* (AUD–GEER–23–01, October 2024).

[14] OIG, *Audit of Select Contract Administration Processes Related to the Construction of New Embassy Compound Mexico City Mexico* (AUD–CGI–24–09, January 2024).

[15] OIG, *Audit of Selected Contractor Requests for Equitable Adjustment Related to Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Construction Projects* (AUD–CGI–25–15, March 2025).

in line with Department policies. The Department did not obtain the data from implementing partners necessary to perform evidence-based analyses of foreign assistance, and did not coordinate funding among all U.S. government agencies.[16] OIG has also previously identified issues with how the Department establishes goals and performs risk assessments for foreign assistance programs. For example, in one prior report, OIG noted that the terms and conditions of selected foreign assistance voluntary contributions for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration did not include measurable objectives to determine the awards' success. As a result, OIG could not determine whether the awards achieved their intended objectives.[17]

Staffing

The Department expends substantial resources on recruiting, training, and retaining a workforce that can advance the Department's foreign policy mission and priorities. Our work indicates that managing its human capital and designing and maintaining an organizational structure to convey clear lines of authority is a continuing challenge for the Department.

The kinds of workforce or human capital management issues that our work identifies varies widely, but it tends to include staffing gaps, inexperienced and undertrained staff, and failures to adhere to leadership principles. Our inspections of Embassy Singapore and Embassy Kinshasa offer recent examples. We reported that the Ambassador to Singapore failed to model Department leadership and management principles. In addition to concerns that his relationships with host government ministries were poorly developed, which impacted the achievement of diplomatic goals and objectives, we also reported that his many projects were frequently unattainable, distracting for staff, and dubious in their ability to promote U.S. interests in Singapore.[18] Meanwhile, at Embassy Kinshasa, we found that chronic staffing challenges, including a twenty-three percent vacancy rate among direct-hire positions, contributed to pervasive internal control issues and increased vulnerability to fraud, waste, and mismanagement in Embassy operations.[19]

Our work also often highlights structural issues that confuse staff, lead to gaps or overlap in authority, and ultimately weaken accountability. In 2021, following the release of a White House strategy that elevated anti-corruption efforts as a key national security and foreign policy priority, the Department announced the creation of the Office of the Coordinator on Global Anti-Corruption. Despite its importance in advancing a key priority, we found that the Department had not properly established the office or codified its roles and responsibilities as required. Without taking the steps to properly establish the office, the Department risked shortcomings in its efforts to achieve anticorruption goals and objectives.[20]

OIG has also previously identified challenges related to the Department's workforce planning, a particular concern given the Department's current effort to implement large-scale reform. For example, in one prior report, OIG found that the Department did not fully use existing procedures, guidance, or best practices to adjust the number and composition of staff at two large missions. OIG reported that until the Department performed a sufficient staffing review that considered mission priorities, the missions would not have assurance that foreign policy priorities and objectives could be achieved by the staffing levels approved for the missions.[21]

MEETING OUR MANDATE

OIG maintains an active oversight portfolio that we are quickly adapting to meet emerging priorities and risks. Ongoing changes related to reorganization of the Department and USAGM, for example, will have a significant impact on the programs and operations we oversee. Effective work planning is key to meeting our goal of conducting oversight that drives positive change and fosters efficiency and effectiveness in U.S. foreign affairs.

Given the scope, scale, and pace of planned Department reform efforts and attendant risks, OIG has prioritized related oversight. Earlier this month, we issued a re-

[16] OIG, *Audit of the Office of the Coordinator for Assistance to Europe and Eurasia's Oversight of Foreign Assistance Funds Transferred to Implementing Partners,* (AUD–CGI–2012, March 2020).

[17] OIG, *Audit of the Department of State's Humanitarian Response to the Ukraine Crisis* (AUD–GEER–24–16, May 2024).

[18] OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Singapore, Singapore* (ISP–I–24–09, February 2024).

[19] OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo* (ISP–I–25–05, February 2025).

[20] OIG, *(U) Management Assistance Report: Actions Needed to Meet Requirements for Establishing the Office of the Coordinator on Global Anti-Corruption* (AUD–GEER–24–19, June 2024).

[21] OIG, *Audit of the Department of State's Approach To Adjust the Size and Composition of U.S. Missions Afghanistan and Iraq* (AUD–MERO–20–38, August 2020).

port designed to inform the Department's ongoing efforts to realign certain USAID functions to the Department. To assist the Department in successfully navigating these changes, this report highlights past oversight observations in an expansive range of relevant areas from foreign assistance administration and personnel management to financial and award management.[22] We are now finalizing an evaluation of the Department's initial USAID realignment efforts that compares this effort against recognized key practices for executing such transitions. We plan to use this work, in addition to related USAID OIG work, to shape our medium-to-long-term transition oversight plans.

State OIG is committed to providing robust oversight of the programs and operations under our purview and we stand ready to take on oversight of USAID functions proposed for realignment to the Department. We have an extensive track record of effective oversight of foreign assistance to draw from in this effort, and we are strategically reorienting our resources to increase our focus on the oversight responsibilities we anticipate transitioning to our office. With that in mind, we established a dedicated foreign assistance oversight division in our Office of Audits. In addition, we are re-engineering our inspections to focus on foreign assistance monitoring and award management, and we are taking steps to scale up our investigative capacity to respond swiftly to foreign assistance-related allegations. We continue to coordinate closely with USAID OIG to promote comprehensive oversight of the proposed transition. Like the broader Department realignment effort, significant legal, operational, and jurisdictional issues must be addressed to provide the seamless oversight required for these programs. Questions remain regarding ongoing, unfinished oversight of past USAID programs and activities and those set to expire without being transferred to the Department. These matters are the focus of ongoing coordination with USAID OIG and Department and congressional stakeholders.

OIG has a long history of delivering oversight in dynamic international settings that carry high national security stakes. OIG continues to deliver important oversight for three overseas contingency operations designed to respond to national security threats in and around Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Syria and Iraq. In the context of Ukraine, for example, we have ongoing work on accountability for property donations to the Ukrainian government, Department support for war crimes accountability, and regional energy diversification efforts. Our oversight efforts related to the conflict have yielded 45 work products with 233 recommendations to improve critical aspects of the Department's response. We also continue to add to our significant body of audit, inspection, and evaluation work related to events in the Middle East. For example, we have an ongoing audit on Department efforts to counter Iran-backed groups, a review of human rights vetting practices for U.S. security assistance, and an audit of the Department's controls to prevent the diversion to terrorist organizations of humanitarian funds provided to the U.N. Agency for Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other international organizations in the region. And, as we finish our inspection of Embassy Cairo, we are moving forward with plans to inspect Embassy Jerusalem this fall.

Last, we are pivoting to address oversight of Administration priorities in other areas. As the Administration has declared drug cartels terrorist organizations and sought to limit the flow of illegal narcotics into the country, we have initiated audit work on the Department's efforts to counter the flow of fentanyl, fentanyl precursor chemicals, and other opioids from the People's Republic of China, India, and Mexico into the United States. As the Administration reviews support for international organizations, we are assessing the Department's efforts to ensure U.N. system accountability, building on our recent inspection of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. And, as the Administration has increased attention on immigration, we are concluding an audit on Department efforts to promote the integration of displaced persons into communities outside of the United States and will be soon kicking off audit work on a key consular program designed to prevent terrorists from entering the United States. Our inspections are similarly refocusing to ensure that we are assessing how embassies are implementing new consular and policy guidance in carrying out their foreign policy mission.

OPERATIONS AND RESOURCES

In response to recent workforce optimization guidance, OIG independently reviewed its programs and operations with a focus on our statutorily required functions. As a result of this review, we are streamlining our structure and operations for efficiency, including the consolidation of program offices to share staff resources,

[22] OIG, *Oversight Observations To Inform Department of State Realignment of U.S. Agency for International Development Functions* (AUD–GEER–25–19, May 2025).

gain flexibility, increase information exchange, and strengthen coordination of planning, risk, and performance management requirements. To reduce our operational footprint and achieve savings, we are also closing our field office in Frankfurt, Germany.

The Subcommittee has been highly supportive of our mission, and we are grateful for the funding we received in recent years to meet emerging oversight requirements as well as the critical upward adjustment to our FY 2024 base appropriation. Looking at FY 2026 and beyond, we will be seeking the Subcommittee's continued support to ensure that we are well-positioned to respond to risks. We are committed to working with the Subcommittee to carefully consider how best to manage our evolving oversight portfolio in a way that avoids potential oversight gaps and promotes comprehensive coverage of leading risks.

CONCLUSION

I am proud of our work at State OIG. The results we provide to the Department, USAGM, Congress, and American taxpayers are critical to protecting our citizens and their interests across the globe. OIG is comprised of talented and committed professionals, dedicated to helping the Department and USAGM accomplish their missions through robust oversight and well designed, practical recommendations. I am grateful to our team for their resilience, ingenuity, integrity, and tenacity in promoting efficiency and effectiveness in the programs and operations we oversee.

In closing, I am confident that I speak for all of OIG when I say that we deeply appreciate the dedication and support of this Subcommittee and its hard-working staff in helping us execute our mission. We remain committed to keeping Congress fully and currently informed and look forward to continuing to provide meaningful results through independent oversight.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TOAYOA ALDRIDGE, ACTING DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID)

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for your request to provide a written statement for the subcommittee's hearing on the State Department's Fiscal Year 2026 budget request. We appreciate the opportunity to share our views on the challenges related to the planned realignment and restructuring of U.S.- funded foreign assistance. As an independent oversight agency, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) does not set or direct policy, but our work is designed to inform those who do. We appreciate the subcommittee's historic and ongoing support of our work.

INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT ROLE OF USAID OIG

Congress created USAID OIG in 1980. For 44 years, USAID OIG has been the only office of inspector general in the Federal government whose sole mission is to oversee U.S.-funded humanitarian and development assistance implemented abroad. Through our dedicated law enforcement professionals, auditors, inspectors, evaluators, and specialized support staff, our experience providing oversight in crisis zones, from South Sudan to Haiti to Ukraine, enables us to offer early warning fraud indicators, lessons learned, and key considerations to Federal agencies designing and implementing new programming overseas.[1]

With an annual budget of less than a quarter of 1 percent of foreign assistance spending, USAID OIG continues to hold bad actors accountable, audit and recover billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars, and generate material improvements to foreign assistance programs and operations. As the administration and Congress look to reform America's foreign assistance architecture, USAID OIG's statutorily mandated oversight of U.S.-funded foreign assistance continues unabated. Our active and ongoing work includes:

—Investigating 210 ongoing criminal, civil, and administrative matters to combat misuse of U.S.-taxpayer dollars spent overseas through fraud, corruption, and diversion of aid to terrorist organizations. This number is expanding.

—Engaging with the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Joint Task Force October 7 (JTF 10–7), an initiative that will seek justice for the victims of the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack in Israel and address the ongoing threat posed by Hamas and its affiliates.

[1] For example, as USAID and the Department of State increased humanitarian assistance funding to Gaza last year, we sent an advisory to Congress and the administration that identified challenges in monitoring the aid, vetting recipients for terrorist ties, and overseeing funds administered through United Nations (UN) agencies.

—Conducting 42 ongoing audits, evaluations, and inspections examining USAID programs and operations, offering lessons, recommendations, and insights for the future administration of foreign assistance.
—Developing an aggressive oversight plan to examine and report in-depth on the transfer of foreign assistance functions from USAID to State.
—Engaging with Congress and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (UN) to bolster oversight and accountability of funding to international organizations, based on our years of leadership in foreign assistance investigations.
—Producing ongoing statutorily mandated reporting to Congress on U.S. overseas contingency operations in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, conducted in partnership with the OIGs of the Departments of Defense and State.
—Executing 75 statutorily mandated investigations into whistleblower retaliation, including preliminary and formal investigations, most of which involve foreign nationals and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) overseas.

IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS IN THE REALIGNMENT OF USAID FUNCTIONS

As the administration moves to merge USAID activities into the Department of State, we have identified the following items necessary to implement the realignment in a manner that prioritizes oversight, accountability, and efficient use of U.S. taxpayer dollars.

I. Management and Administration of Awards Previously Held by USAID

As billions of dollars administered by USAID move to the State Department, consideration should be given to ensuring robust accountability and oversight.[2] This includes tailoring standard award provisions to the specific category of recipient, from small/local NGO to global UN agency. Further, adequate resources and attention should be given to employing personnel with professional expertise in humanitarian and development projects and securely transferring information technology and payment systems to prevent exposure from malign actors.

A. Need for New and Comprehensive Standard Award Provisions to Ensure Accountability Over Foreign Assistance Awards

Key to ensuring accountability and oversight of taxpayer-funded foreign assistance is the existence of standard award provisions that U.S.-funded awardees are required to follow. USAID established the extensive Automated Directives System (ADS) to govern all aspects of operational policy and standard award provisions, including pre-award, post-award, and audit requirements. The ADS contained hundreds of chapters dedicated to foreign assistance operations and program management, compared to the Department of State's much leaner provisions. Such ADS provisions were critical for addressing unique considerations and complications posed by different types of implementers (NGOs, contractors, international organizations) and contained useful pre-award certifications designed to identify material risks posed by prospective awardees. These included required certifications concerning whether an NGO seeking U.S. funds had engaged with designated terrorist organizations, required reporting of counter-fraud and compliance measures, and vetting of staff for past participation in terrorist organizations in regions such as Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen.

The ADS clauses, which in many cases were prompted by USAID OIG recommendations and actual events that jeopardized foreign assistance, also leaned into aggressive mandatory disclosure requirements by implementers, including direct reporting of fraud allegations to USAID OIG at the subawardee level. As the Department of State takes over management of these awards, it will be essential to establish similarly robust standard award provisions, particularly those promoting accountability and oversight. Our suggestions on these clauses and other efforts to expand accountability in foreign assistance are addressed in this memorandum.

B. Holding Implementers Accountable and Recovering Questioned Costs

At the time of this writing, USAID OIG has 320 open recommendations from its audits, inspections, and evaluations of USAID programs and operations. This includes over $54 million in questioned costs that are pending final evaluation by a USAID contracting or agreement officer for recovery back to the U.S. government.

[2] We recently published a memorandum titled "Additional Observations on Challenges to Oversight and Accountability Over Foreign Assistance as a Whole" to flag for policymakers longstanding challenges and potential solutions to enhanced accountability over foreign aid.

Either USAID and/or the Department of State should continue examining these costs and seek remedy for costs determined to be noncompliant with regulations.

Relatedly, the operational dissolution of USAID has included the reduction of personnel in its Suspension and Debarment Office. This has left numerous matters in a pending, unresolved status and has adversely impacted USAID's capability to effectively process new USAID OIG referrals of individuals and entities for government-wide exclusions. USAID OIG refers bad actors for exclusion based upon evidence of fraud, corruption, or diversion to terrorist organizations. Notably, USAID OIG had to refer its unprecedented investigation into the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)—identifying in March numerous individuals associated with Hamas and the October 7 terrorist attacks in Israel—to a different agency for suspension and debarment consideration in order to prevent their recirculation through other U.S.-funded organizations. No action has been taken to date by that agency.

C. Ensuring Expertise of U.S. Officials Administering Foreign Assistance

Transfer of functions from USAID to the Department of State also risks the loss of institutional knowledge and professional expertise for administering billions of dollars in complex humanitarian and development programs, particularly in challenging overseas environments. USAID personnel had considerable expertise in monitoring and administering humanitarian and development programs. By one estimate, some 70 percent of USAID staff were highly specialized, including medical doctors, water and sanitation specialists, and engineers. The Department of State's hiring actions to ensure that this expertise is in place for administering complex foreign assistance programs will take time and resources—particularly as the Department of State is undergoing its own internal restructuring—and a demonstrated institutional knowledge management capability will take time and resources to establish or re-create.

Further, the billions of dollars in USAID-funded awards required contracting and agreement officers to have specific training and certification for necessary warrant levels. Niche expertise was essential to administer these unique and complex awards to international organizations, foreign recipients, and small, local implementers unfamiliar with U.S. regulations and agency-specific award provisions. Ensuring that the Department of State has sufficient resources and skill sets necessary to conduct proper award management is vital to ensuring programmatic success and identifying noncompliance, poor performance, financial irregularities, and criminal activity involving taxpayer funds.

D. Preventing Legal Exposure for Incurred Costs Needed to Closeout Awards and Ensuring Proper Disposition of Program Assets

Untimely payment of costs incurred by USAID-funded implementers may expose the U.S. government to significant liabilities. Prompt Payment Act violations arising from delayed payments will accrue interest, and nonpayment to suppliers could result in litigation against the Federal government, adding costs to taxpayers. Notably, in fiscal year 2024, USAID globally incurred less than $56,000 in Prompt Payment Act—related interest, compared to over $1 million in estimated interest incurred between January and April 2025. It will be essential for USAID and/or Department of State officials to ensure timely payment for services performed, which includes having processes and capabilities in place to verify the accuracy of invoices and the stated work performed.

Further, unanticipated termination notices and delayed payments presented significant operational constraints for many USAID implementers, with some organizations effectively shuttering and abandoning USAID-funded assets. On March 13, USAID directed contract and agreement officers to instruct implementers to prepare expedited inventory lists and disposition plans for assets in four priority categories: critical security risk, high-value assets, reputational risk, and commodities. Our ongoing audits of asset disposition around the world have flagged concerns about USAID's ability to close out these awards and appropriately account for assets by July 1. For example, as of May 1, USAID/Southern Africa had not approved asset disposition plans for almost half of the awards it manages with high-value property, such as mobile health clinics, valued at $10 million. Delays in contract and grant closeouts may result in lapses in deobligation, unresolved questioned costs, and contractor claims for which no responsible authority is clearly defined, exposing the U.S. government to protracted legal challenges and financial risks.

Similarly, the expedited drawdown of USAID's overseas presence means early termination of leases for work and living space for Foreign Service Officers and other staff. Additionally, if vehicles and other U.S. government property overseas and domestically, like furniture and IT equipment, are not properly transferred to an ap-

proved entity, they will need to be sold at auction, typically returning only cents on the dollar. For example, in April, USAID announced that laid-off staff (nearly 4,000 U.S. direct hires) should keep all government-furnished electronic devices currently in their possession—such as laptops and iPhones—"for convenience." Measures should be in place to ensure and validate that this equipment is appropriately wiped of any sensitive data and not compromised by malign parties.

E. Ensuring Integrity of Information Technology Systems as Data Is Migrated From USAID to the Department of State

Management of existing awards also may be impacted by loss or corruption of data that could occur during the merger. USAID uses systems such as the Global Acquisition and Assistance System, Agency Secure Image and Storage Tracking System, and Phoenix for contract management and payment. The transfer of these systems, as well as personnel and financial systems, to the Department of State must account for data migration risks such as loss or corruption of data. Compromised data risks duplicative, erroneous, or missed payments to awardees.

During any migration and integration process, sensitive data related to the administration of U.S. foreign assistance containing classified or personally identifiable information is vulnerable to unauthorized access, leaks, or breaches undermining system confidentiality and integrity. Data breaches may also result in violations of privacy laws. Just this month, we alerted USAID to concerns regarding access to restricted information technology areas at two missions amid the winding down of USAID operations.

Similarly, to ensure system integrity and continuity of operations, USAID's datacenter facilities, network communications, corporate applications, and use of the usaid.gov domain are essential for securely accessing the Agency's IT resources, which are key to fulfilling ongoing responsibilities. Disruptions or failures during system migration or impacting integration processes could materially impair ongoing operations of systems and services threatening programming that is transferred to State. Further, interruptions to USAID applications and data would also negatively impact USAID OIG's active and prospective criminal investigations and ability to advance high-profile ongoing cases.

Finally, migration of USAID systems into the Department of State presents unique compliance requirements, system integration challenges, and the potential exposure of sensitive data. Processes should also ensure that data sharing, system access, security controls, and data retention activities comply with Federal law and guidance including the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002, Privacy Act, Federal Records Act, National Archives and Records Administration regulations, E-Government Act, Freedom of Information Act, and the Inspector General Act. Noncompliance can result in legal liabilities, sanctions, and audits and can undermine public trust and overall agency accountability. USAID OIG audit and investigative data (including evidence) is subject to longer retention periods; therefore, the availability of and controlled access to that data must be properly maintained.

II. Specific Challenges to Oversight of Foreign Assistance

Congress established USAID OIG in 1980 through Public Law 96–533, as an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Under the IG Act, as amended, USAID OIG is mandated by law to oversee USAID and "any successor agency primarily responsible for administering part 1 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961."[3] A vast portfolio of continuing, ongoing foreign aid exists, including residual or transferred USAID activities and contracts, grants, bilateral government agreements, trust funds, and other types of funding instruments signed under USAID-specific award provisions, all of which are subject to fraud, corruption, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. This includes potential theft of equipment in the field by terrorist organizations, submission of false or inflated invoices for payment, and other exposure to the national security, fiscal, and reputational interests of the United States. In pursuing this continued oversight, USAID OIG professionals—including law enforcement officers—must be granted prompt access to records, information and personnel at the Department of State to further ongoing and prospective investigations pertaining to current, residual, or legacy programming existing via USAID award agreements.

As noted above, we currently have 210 active and ongoing investigations many of which are in partnership with the Department of Justice and U.S. Attorneys' Offices across the country as well as examinations of USAID's currently administered

[3] 5 U.S.C.A. § 409(a).

awards, closeout process, disposition of assets in the field, and other ongoing and legacy activities. Coupled with the recent reductions and movements in USAID personnel responsible for agency programmatic oversight, USAID OIG's independent oversight capability is vital in the near-term for reducing fraud, corruption, waste, and abuse and keeping the administration, the Congress and the public meaningfully informed as required by law. Adequate funds will be necessary in order to effectively accomplish this ongoing mission, while Congress considers options for the long-term independent oversight structure for foreign assistance.

A. Need for Comprehensive Risk-Mitigation Measures and Program Oversight

We have previously reported vulnerabilities within USAID's oversight and accountability mechanisms. This includes concerns about the limited scope of vetting of awardees for terrorist ties, failure to assess data provided by contracted third-party monitors, and delays in post- award vetting in emergency circumstances. USAID's bureaus, particularly the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, made significant progress in these areas, which supported enhanced risk mitigation and program oversight efforts. However, challenges remain. The transfer of programming to the Department of State should be accompanied by policies that establish rigorous vetting of award applicants, increased scrutiny of direct and indirect costs, strong internal oversight, and monitoring directly by Department of State officials or by third-party monitors in nonpermissive areas inaccessible to U.S. personnel.

B. Oversight of Awards to UN and Other Public International Organizations

Any funding channeled through public international organizations, including UN agencies, will require specific and nuanced oversight. For over a decade, USAID OIG has been the primary entity conducting oversight over U.S.-funded foreign assistance implemented by UN agencies, and we have repeatedly worked to publicly identify the challenges to transparency and accountability in the UN system. Our forward-leaning approach has led to various memoranda of understanding with multilateral and bilateral oversight entities aimed at, among other things, ensuring that U.S. investigators can obtain the information they need from UN agencies to assess allegations of misconduct involving U.S.-funds. Such creative solutions to the unique oversight challenges presented by cross-border investigations involving UN agencies are the result of our deep expertise and established relationships with international partners. Retaining such knowledge, access and cooperation is vital to continuing to globally pursue criminals who defraud or corrupt foreign assistance.

C. Importance of Third-Party Monitoring

USAID has long employed third-party monitoring as one of the mechanisms to supplement the Agency's efforts to ensure that projects and activities meet their objectives. However, many, if not all, of USAID's third-party monitoring contracts were terminated following the foreign assistance review. Third-party monitors are frequently used in overseas regions where U.S. officials are unable to safely travel to conduct site visits, such as eastern Ukraine and Gaza.

They are also used to ensure that implementers meet applicable award requirements; have effective internal controls in place; and are not compromised by fraud, waste, and abuse. For example, following the recent termination of USAID's third-party monitoring mechanism in Ukraine, USAID cannot verify or monitor the delivery, installation, or use of products, purchases, or services rendered. Additionally, USAID terminated the contractor overseeing U.S. direct budget assistance and the "Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration" loans to the Ukrainian government through the World Bank's PEACE fund. Taxpayers would be well-served by having third-party monitoring mechanisms in place ahead of the transfer of awards to prevent gaps in vital oversight of programs executed in nonpermissive environments.

CONCLUSION

As the United States undertakes a historic realignment and reorganization of its foreign assistance architecture and programs, USAID OIG's dedicated workforce remains devoted to ensuring oversight and accountability over U.S.-funded assistance. Through our ongoing investigations, audits, and other specialized work, we remain committed to conducting the independent oversight that the American people rely on and deserve.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

No questions were submitted to the agencies for response subsequent to the hearing.

CONCLUSION OF HEARING

Senator GRAHAM. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:56 p.m., Tuesday, May 20, the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]

STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

NONDEPARTMENTAL WITNESSES

[CLERK'S NOTE.—The subcommittee was unable to hold hearings on nondepartmental witnesses. The statements and letters of those submitting written testimony are as follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AFS INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMS USA

I am submitting this testimony to urge you to fully fund educational and cultural exchanges and voice my opposition to President Trump's request to eliminate 93% of the funding for educational and cultural exchanges conducted by the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the FY26 Federal budget. Such a cut in funding which would virtually eliminate the youth programs we care deeply about in Kansas—namely the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX), Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES and YES Abroad), Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX), and National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI–Y) programs in the FY26 Federal budget and would essentially eliminate the programs by 2027. As a citizen of Kansas, I do not support this budget request. I believe continued funding for these important Department of State programs is essential.

As an AFS volunteer in Kansas my husband and I have personally hosted students at Manhattan High School from both the FLEX and YES programs over a period of time spanning 25 years. The students who arrive in the U.S for their exchange year supported by funding for the FLEX, CBYX, and YES programs are responsible for participating in a number of educational activities designed to enhance their insights into how the U.S. functions, provide impetus for a broader view of the U.S. than they might find in their immediate surroundings and assist them in gaining an understanding of how positive leadership can be exercised. These students are, without fail, mature, open-minded individuals who provide positive leadership in their schools and communities both while on program and upon their return to their home countries. While on program, these students have the unique opportunity to build bridges of cultural understanding amongst their American peers and exchange students from other countries.

One example of this is the story of two boys hosted recently at our high school. One was from Kosovo, the other from Serbia. As you are aware, long-standing ethnic tensions and conflicts have plagued that region for centuries. During their exchange year, these young men became close friends as they engaged in dialogue focused on discovering similarities rather than differences. The boy from Kosovo provided emotional support for the Serbian student during a particular period in January that year when the conflicts between the two countries threated to escalate. Their open dialogue and developing friendship could not have happened unless they had been together during their exchange year in the U.S. Surely, an experience like this one is a good example of citizen-to-citizen diplomacy that supports peace and understanding among nations.

Another YES student from Pakistan was a shining example of volunteerism at its highest level. She logged over 100 hours of volunteer service at her high school and in the local community. She organized a community Red Cross event for her peers

while on program and continues to focus on volunteerism for improving social and economic conditions for young women in her home country.

Almost yearly, we have American students who study abroad with support from the NSLI–Y program. Many of these students have built upon their study abroad experiences, having gained language, critical thinking and communication skills that contributed to their going on to successful careers in diplomatic and international business.

None of these stories could have happened without the support and funding for the Department of State initiative. These students rely upon such funding for their education and exchange experiences and we here in Kansas benefit from the opportunities and benefit from the opportunity to welcome the world to Kansas through such programs. These programs create lifelong ties to Kansas with young people from and in strategically important countries that we could not have through any other means. What better way to build peace and understanding for a better future?

[This statement was submitted by Nancy Bridges, Educator and Volunteer Leader in Kansas.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AFS INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMS USA

As President and CEO of AFS Intercultural Programs, USA, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony supporting funding of $741 Million in Fiscal Year 2026 for educational and cultural exchange programs administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

AFS–USA (formerly the American Field Service) pioneered international educational exchange for high school students in 1947. We offer international exchange programs in more than 80 countries around the world. More than 2,600 Americans in communities large, small, rural and suburban throughout the United States volunteer their time and resources to support the work of AFS across America. Since its inception, more than 500,000 people have participated in exchanges through the AFS network.

Public diplomacy, at this most fundamental level, improves perceptions of America and Americans around the world. America's educational and cultural exchange programs promote people to people ties between communities throughout the United States and all around the world—contributing to US security, strength and prosperity.

The President's FY26 request for ECA's funding amounts to a 93% cut to the Bureau's budget, which would essentially mean the complete elimination of Department of State international exchange programs. I would like to respectfully press the subcommittee to reject that request and instead fully fund exchange programs. The requested appropriation will allow the Department of State to maintain its strong suite of educational and cultural exchange programs, a cost-effective public diplomacy tool that has a proven track record of making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

America's Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs:

Increase Mutual Understanding and Strengthen U.S. Leadership.—Leaders and communities around the globe who take part in these programs have close personal ties the United States and are more inclined to have a favorable perception of Americans and the United States.

Support U.S. Foreign Policy Interests and U.S. National Security.—The networks of close personal connection and understanding create the life-long ties that support cooperation between the United States and countries around the world.

Strengthen the U.S. Economy.—Americans who take part in the programs, whether as participants in a program overseas or by hosting a student coming to the United States, gain valuable skills and knowledge that benefit their personal and professional lives and expand their networks. Most of the funds allocated to these programs are spent in the United States or for the benefit of Americans participating in the program.

U.S. government-sponsored youth exchange programs account for less than one quarter of one percent of the U.S. Department of State Budget, which, in itself, comprises less than 1 percent of the Federal budget, and the impact of these programs on communities throughout the United States and around the world is enormous. Through investment in these programs, Americans gain valuable communication, interpersonal and language skills. Additionally, the United States gains informal networks and channels of communication through ties of mutual understanding that create trusting relationships across decades between the people of the United States and strategically important countries around the world.

Importantly, American participants gain a unique insight into their own country, as Sara (Janssen) Knight of Bear Lake MI, hosted in Dresden, Germany put it:

> *"I didn't go abroad to become a "global citizen." I went because my family raised me to love this country and to understand it more deeply by seeing the world beyond our borders. Growing up, my family hosted year-long exchange students five times from five different countries. They opened our home not to dilute our values, but to share the beauty of American life—our freedoms, our traditions, our way of life.*
>
> *International exchange isn't just about travel. It builds stronger Americans—more informed, more grateful, more engaged, and more prepared to lead. International exchange is vital. It deserves our continued support."*

The U.S. Congress has provided extraordinary foresight in establishing and continuing to strongly support the ECA Youth Programs. The American people are the best representatives of the United States and their own communities. These programs provide some of the best opportunities for Americans in communities in all 50 States to be their own diplomats and to continually ensure ties between the United States and the people of strategically important countries around the world remain vibrant and current—continuously refreshed through a network of close personal ties built on deep understanding and mutual respect. The programs also provide American youth with the skills—such as language acquisition, problem solving, and communication skills, critical to their own success and to the success of the United States in remaining highly competitive, economically vibrant and leading the world in building peaceful and productive relationships.

Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) Program—Participating students develop critical language and interpersonal skills while learning what it is like to live and attend school in Germany and in reverse, German students live with host families and attend school in the United Sates. The CBYX program has been a key element in the cementing of the transatlantic bridge and a relationship with Germany, not only producing tens of thousands of close personal ties over the decades but symbolizes a deep commitment between the legislatures of both countries.

Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program—brings high school students from strategically important countries around the world, to live with American host families and study in American schools and provides American high school students from across the U.S. with the opportunity to gain valuable skills by living and studying in several of these countries for an academic year.

Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program—brings high school students from countries across southeastern Europe and Eurasia to live with American host families and study in American schools and provides American high school students from across the U.S. with the opportunity to gain valuable skills by living and studying in several of these countries for an academic year.

National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI–Y) Program—provides merit-based scholarships to U.S. high school students and recent graduates interested in learning less-commonly studied foreign languages overseas, specifically Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian (Tajiki), Russian, and Turkish, providing the United States with a talent bank of people with a high level of critical language skills.

Each year, students engage in a highly competitive merit-based application process for these scholarships.

On behalf of thousands of American host families, volunteers, school and US alumni of these highly effective programs, I request that Congress ensure the continued success of these uniquely American programs connecting the American people to the world and continuously refreshing a vast pool of people around the world who are positively connected and warmly inclined toward the United States and the American people. The Youth Programs administered by the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau should be directly mandated by Congress to be supported at a level no less than the $90 million and Congress should require the US Department of State to consult Congress before any changes to these highly effective programs are contemplated.

[This statement was submitted by Tara Hofmann, President and CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AFS INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMS USA

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony supporting funding of $741 Million in Fiscal Year 2026 for educational and cultural exchange programs administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

I would like to share with you my thoughts and experiences related to the impact high school intercultural exchange students have on communities in Northwest Kansas. As a life long resident of Northwest Kansas, retired educator and a 56 year volunteer with AFS Intercultural Programs USA, I have seen first hand the benefit to families, schools and communities through hosting an exchange student for a year or a semester.

As an example, in Goodland, Kansas, a small community of 4500 in Northwest Kansas, residents have limited exposure to other cultures besides the Hispanic community. Since 1970, Goodland High School has hosted over 100 AFS international students from more than 40 countries. There have also been 5 international AFS teachers and 16 Goodland High School students who have gone abroad to 13 different countries.

These students and teachers not only change the lives of their host families but the students in the high school and members of the community of Goodland and the surrounding area. Local students learn more about geography of the world, cultural differences and a wide range of national customs, food, dress, dance, etc. For many in Goodland, these exchange students have been their only exposure to the wider world outside of Kansas. Lifelong relationships have developed via the ease of social media. Families travel internationally to meet each other-both coming to the United States and traveling to visit students in their native countries. International students return for school reunions (at least one international student each reunion). Public diplomacy at work, day in and day out, bit by bit.

When you multiply this example to all of the other communities in Kansas who host high school exchange programs, the multiplier effect is quite impressive. I believe there are more than 40 organizations recognized to host high school exchange students in Kansas. AFS alone has hosted dozens of students each year scattered across the State from Goodland to Sublette (Southwest Kansas) to Topeka, Manhattan, Wichita and Medicine Lodge (South-central Kansas).

During my tenure as a leader of the AFS volunteers of Kansas, I witnessed the affect international students on the Department of State scholarship programs have had throughout the state of Kansas. These programs include:

—*Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program*—strategically placed countries around the world.
—*Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program*—countries across southeastern Europe and Eurasia.
—*National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI–Y)*—less-commonly studied world languages: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian (Tajiki), Russian and Turkish.
—*Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX)*—between legislatures of USA and Germany.

Each year we host several students from these programs. The students are exceptional, eager to learn all that they can about the United States people and culture and take that knowledge back home-all which improves international relations at the grassroots level. Their goal is to make the most of their year here as evidenced by their participation in community service projects and their opportunities to learn about local and State governments, volunteer agencies and other entities that might not exist in their countries. Story after story exists of community based projects initiated by these scholarship students upon their return home making life better for their local communities.

One of the Goodland High School students, Aleah Tew, has just returned from her year abroad with CBYX in Germany. She shared: "The CBYX Program offered me a life-changing and eye-opening experience. The connections and relationships I have formed are special and unique and are already some of the dearest to me. My view of our world and our relationships with foreign nations and peoples have been expanded to incorporate an international perspective. I can't hardly imagine how I thought or lived the way I did a year ago, and I hope people continue to build international relationships and support like I have." She added: "I'm really hoping they continue the funding for these programs."

In my role on the AFS Intercultural Programs USA Board of Directors and during my time as the chair, I was able to interact with many of the staff members who manage these Educational and Cultural Exchange programs of the U.S. Department

of State in a wide variety of countries. They orchestrate and implement excellent standards for student selection, orientation, support and re-integration back into their native culture. American students on the CBYX, NSLI and YES Abroad program have the same opportunity to be challenged by a new culture as they learn lesser known languages and experience drastically different cultures from the one in which they grew up. I also was fortunate enough to be able to visit with our Senators and Representative on the Hill during multiple visits to share the life changing experiences that have been happening for decades as a result of these programs.

We all have so much to learn from each other and high school international exchange has a much greater grassroots impact than is visible to the naked eye.

All of these programs help us move toward our goal of a more just and peaceful world.

Congress should direct the U.S. Department of State Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau to continue the Youth Programs at a level no less than $90 million and should require the U.S. Department of State to consult Congress before any changes to these highly effective programs are considered.

[This statement was submitted by Mary Porterfield, Former Chair of Board of Directors.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AIPAC

For Fiscal Year 2026, AIPAC urges the subcommittee's full support for $3.3 billion in security assistance for our strategic partner Israel, as set forth in the 2016 U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Security Assistance. We deeply appreciate this subcommittee's support of full funding of Israel's security assistance in every previous year under the MOU.

American assistance has enabled Israel to defend itself and reestablish its deterrence in the aftermath of October 7—the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. However, there can be no closure to the tragic events of October 7 until every one of 59 remaining hostages in Gaza, including 5 Americans, comes home and Hamas no longer controls Gaza. The United States must continue to stand with Israel as it wages a legitimate and justified war against Hamas.

Over the last 19 months, Iran and its terrorist proxies have launched a seven-front war against the Jewish state. Israel's successful military response has upended the Iranian-backed axis, offering the prospect for a transformed region in line with U.S. interests.

In Lebanon, a new hope for positive change is on the horizon for the first time in decades. Israel's military campaign has decisively weakened Hezbollah and bolstered the Lebanese Armed Forces. In Syria, Israel's campaign was an important catalyst that finally ended 50 years of the Assad family's brutal rule and ended over 13 years of civil war that killed over half a million people. The ultimate realization of Israel's goals of removing Hamas from power and disarming the terrorist group could also portend a path toward a brighter future for Gaza.

However, the overall picture is far from rosy. At this moment, Hamas still controls sufficient territory and capability in Gaza to launch missiles at central Israel. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad are also seeking to attack Israel from the West Bank. The Houthis in Yemen pose a persistent threat to both Israel and the United States and have recently restarted ballistic attacks on Israel. Iran's escalatory direct aerial assaults on Israel have opened a new, dangerous chapter for the region—only compounded by the Iranian regime's unbridled pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Given the threats confronting Israel, America must continue to provide the Jewish state with the security assistance needed to ensure it can defend itself—by itself.

ISRAEL: AN INDISPENSABLE STRATEGIC PARTNER

The United States has long defined Israel's survival and security as a key American interest. Israel's enemies are also America's enemies. When Israel degrades Hamas and Hezbollah, it makes America safer. When Israel destroys Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons, it makes America safer. When Israel targets Iran's ballistic missile production capability, it makes America safer. Every day, Israeli intelligence and technology are being shared with America to save American lives.

Today, the U.S. and Israel face evolving threats as the Iran-Russia-China-DPRK axis and rogue non-state actors increasingly exploit emerging technologies, such as drone and cyber capabilities, to further their aggressive and destabilizing ends. Israel stands at the forefront of global innovation and is poised to be a critical and reliable ally to the U.S. as we engage in a historic, high-stakes race with China for

global technological supremacy. The 2022 Jerusalem U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Joint Declaration critically committed to "move forward the U.S.-Israel defense partnership through cooperation in cutting-edge defense technologies such as high energy laser weapons systems to defend the skies of Israel and in the future those of other U.S. and Israel security partners."

Israel's stable, democratic and dependably pro-American orientation ensures that America can consistently rely on its alliance with the Jewish state. This has been an enduring constant through Republican and Democratic administrations and across Israeli governments, anchored by bipartisan support in Congress for the relationship. Given the increasingly complex array of global threats facing America, Israel's role as a reliable ally in a critical region is more important than ever.

We greatly appreciate that Congress' strong bipartisan support for security assistance to Israel has enabled Israel to defend itself while securing vital U.S. national security interests in the region. This crucial assistance also helps support our own domestic U.S. defense industry, as Israel spends over 80% of the aid it receives on military hardware made in America.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES

In Gaza, Israel faces a persistent and ongoing threat from Hamas' terrorist army. Israel has defeated the majority of Hamas battalions and destroyed a significant portion of the group's terror infrastructure. However, Hamas is not yet defeated. The terrorist group has refused to disarm and still holds 59 hostages, including five American citizens, in the Gaza Strip. In recent weeks, Hamas has also demonstrated the capacity to launch missile attacks at Israeli population centers like Tel Aviv and Ashkelon. Israel must be given the time and support to complete its just and achievable objectives: removing Hamas from power, ensuring Hamas can never again threaten Israel as it did on October 7, and securing the return of all the hostages.

To the north, the fragile ceasefire agreement signed in late November has largely held, ending 13 months of daily missile and drone attacks from Lebanon that displaced some 70,000 Israelis. The months ahead will test the ability of the new Lebanese government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to stabilize the situation in southern Lebanon and make sure Hezbollah is no longer a threat to Israel. Additionally, Israel is preparing for potential threats emanating from Syria, where the fall of the Assad regime removed a major Iranian ally but created a vacuum that could be filled by other terrorist elements.

To the south, the Houthis in Yemen have resumed their ballistic missile attacks at Israel despite the ongoing U.S. military campaign to weaken their capabilities. The Iranian-backed terrorist group has caused the greatest disruption to global trade since the COVID–19 pandemic, forcing as much as 70 percent of international shipments away from the Red Sea.

Standing behind all these threats is, of course, the Iranian regime. Tehran remains the greatest threat to Israeli security and regional stability. Its two unprecedented and direct aerial assaults on Israel last year marked a new, dangerous escalation. In those attacks, Iran launched over 300 projectiles—including ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones—designed to cause immense death and destruction. These significant attacks represent only a small preview of the types of threats Israel could face in the future. Congress' long-standing support for Israel's missile defense, along with the coalition of nations assembled by the U.S., helped ensure that Israel could repel these unprecedented assaults.

On the Iranian nuclear front, the regime has increased its stockpile of 20 and 60 percent enriched uranium, according to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) data. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi warned that Tehran already has enough uranium enriched to near-weapons-grade levels to make "several" nuclear bombs. Put simply, Iran is at the cusp of a nuclear-weapons capability developed explicitly to eliminate Israel. The objective for any nuclear agreement with Iran must be the complete dismantlement of Iran's nuclear infrastructure—the only reliable way to prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon.

It is in America's vital interest for Israel—our sole reliable democratic ally in the region—to have the military capabilities needed to decisively defeat these mutual threats.

ISRAEL IS DRAMATICALLY INCREASING ITS OWN DEFENSE SPENDING

Committed to defending itself, by itself, Israel is significantly increasing its defense spending, ensuring it's prepared to counter these ongoing and emerging threats. When Israel seeks assistance from the United States, it is not because it is not doing its own part.

Before October 7, Israel spent 5.47% of its GDP on defense, more than any other Western nation. This number rose to 9.29% during the war and is projected to be 6.35% in 2025, significantly more than the NATO-ally expectation of 2%—a benchmark that many European allies still struggle to meet.

This spending increase comes as Israel's economy is under serious strain from the ongoing conflict, with significant numbers of reservists called up into military service, severe damage inflicted in the country's north and south, and a substantial drop in tourism. Rising defense spending is also fueling higher interest rates and inflation. Investments in Israel's high-tech sector declined by 30% in 2024.

FUNDING, POLICY AND OVERSIGHT PROVISIONS

It is imperative that Congress reject attempts to threaten Israel's security by linking new political conditions to aid. By continuing its policy of approving a clean appropriation to Israel, this subcommittee will strengthen Israel's security, promote American interests, and enhance the prospects for peace. We express our appreciation to the subcommittee for consistently opposing and rejecting all efforts to attach new political conditions to Israel's critical security funding.

We are also grateful to the Trump Administration for withdrawing National Security Memorandum 20 and expediting the delivery of arms to Israel, and we continue to oppose any legislative provisions that would impose new limits, restrictions or conditions on aid to Israel or military sales to Israel. Congress must continue to provide Israel with the capabilities necessary to guarantee its safety and security.

We further believe that continued U.S. aid to Egypt and Jordan is also important to help ensure stability in the region, as is the strong U.S. commitment to the Multinational Force and Observers mission in the Sinai. In addition, AIPAC supports ongoing Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation under the auspices of the United States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority—if Palestinian leaders demonstrate a commitment to this shared effort. We urge Congress to prioritize the hope for a better future for Israelis and Palestinians by reauthorizing and continuing to invest in the Middle East Partnership for Peace program—an important initiative spearheaded by former Representative and House Appropriations Committee Chair Nita Lowey, a tireless leader and steadfast supporter of the U.S.-Israel relationship. We want to extend our condolences to Rep. Lowey's family, former colleagues, and many friends throughout the world.

We also urge the subcommittee to maintain long-standing provisions in the bill and associated report that ensure strict oversight and reporting requirements related to Lebanon, Iran, Syria and the Palestinians. Any funding to the Palestinians must comply with the Taylor Force Act to put continued pressure on the Palestinian Authority to stop incentivizing terrorism. We urge the committee to make permanent the ban on U.S. funding to UNRWA, which has been hopelessly compromised by its support for and collaboration with Hamas. The subcommittee must also maintain existing provisions to cut assistance should the Palestinians continue to engage in counterproductive unilateralism at the United Nations or the International Criminal Court.

AIPAC continues to urge support for a robust and bipartisan foreign aid budget that ensures America's strong global leadership position. Foreign aid enables the United States to support key allies like Israel, spur our job-creating exports, stem the spread of diseases, and help prevent countries in turmoil from becoming breeding grounds for terrorism.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ISRAEL IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Israel's security challenges are compounded by attacks it faces at the United Nations and other international forums, where Israel's enemies attempt to isolate and demonize the Jewish state. The latest attacks have come in the forms of the International Criminal Court's issuance of baseless arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as South Africa's defamatory attempt to falsely accuse Israel of genocide at the International Court of Justice. The U.S. must oppose such blatant attempts to weaponize and politicize international judicial fora against Israel. We also urge the subcommittee to maintain the prohibition on funding to the anti-Israel Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry and oppose the implementation of any of its illegitimate recommendations.

CONCLUSION

While Israel heavily invests its own resources in its own defense, U.S. security assistance remains essential to ensuring the Jewish state maintains a qualitative military edge (QME). In accordance with the 2016 U.S.-Israel MOU, AIPAC strongly

urges the subcommittee to approve $3.3 billion in security assistance to Israel for fiscal year 2026 without any additional political restrictions.

As Congress considers U.S. Middle East priorities, one thing remains certain: Israel is America's indispensable ally as Washington faces the threats and opportunities of tomorrow. Israel promotes America's values and interests in a critical region, while also leading the world in high-tech innovation. This subcommittee deserves great credit for its stalwart advocacy for the U.S.-Israel relationship. That includes not only reliably providing Israel with full funding of vital security assistance without any conditions but also incorporating important policy provisions on so many aspects of U.S. Mideast policy. This bipartisan support will remain even more critical as America and Israel continue to work together to address the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

[This statement was submitted by Elliot Brandt, CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALLIANCE FOR INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

As Executive Director of the Alliance for International Exchange, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony supporting funding of $741 million in Fiscal Year 2026 for educational and cultural exchange programs administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

The Alliance comprises U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations representing the international educational and cultural exchange community in the United States. We greatly appreciate our productive working relationship with the subcommittee and its strong and consistent support for exchange programs.

The President's FY26 request for ECA's funding amounts to a 93% cut to the Bureau's budget, which would essentially mean the complete elimination of and end to Department of State international exchange programs. I would like to respectfully press the subcommittee to reject that request and instead fully fund exchange programs. The requested appropriation will allow the Department of State to maintain its strong suite of educational and cultural exchange programs, a cost-effective public diplomacy tool that has a proven track record of making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS MAKE AMERICA SAFER

Exchange programs make America safer through increasing global and strategic regional influence. More than 17 million leaders around the world are alumni of U.S. exchange programs and DOS exchanges engage political and business leaders from 155 countries, many of them from countries key to our National security interests (e.g. Brazil, India, Russia, and Turkey). U.S. Department of State evaluations repeatedly show that international exchange participants who visit the United States complete their programs with a better impression of our country, the American people, and our values. U.S. ambassadors around the world consistently rank exchange programs among the most useful catalysts for long-term political change and mutual understanding. Notable exchange alumni include: 721 current and former heads of foreign governments, 87 Nobel Prize winners, 75 representatives to the United Nations, and 39 current and former heads of international organizations.

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS MAKE AMERICA STRONGER

Exchange programs make America stronger by increasing opportunities and benefits for American. Every year, 15,000 Americans participate in Department of State exchanges, and 280,000 Americans study abroad; 31 million job openings require skills in communication, leadership and problem-solving—all skills gained through exchange experiences; Tens of thousands of American businesses, schools, and families host and benefit from exchange participants every year. American students studying abroad through U.S. Department of State exchange programs are ambassadors of the next generation of American leaders, highlighting our most promising young people and promoting American values around the world.

It is essential to continue funding ECA at its current level in order to provide opportunities for young Americans to study and research abroad, equipping them with the skill-set they need to succeed in today's global marketplace. These programs build language and intercultural competencies for American citizens and future world leaders, allowing them to better solve important problems in the U.S. and around the world, and achieve greater understanding in both the private and public sectors.

Additionally, international exchanges raise the profile and prestige of U.S. educational institutions and partners who interact with them, creating long-lasting cul-

tural and business relationships. Continuing the support this subcommittee has given ECA year after year by funding the bureau at current levels makes it possible for existing programs to invest in the infrastructure and outreach models needed to reach communities and partner with organizations that serve rural, first-generation Americans, and others who have not traditionally engaged in exchanges. By doing so, the U.S. ensures that its foreign policy delivers for Americans by including all Americans front and center through its people-to-people diplomacy.

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS MAKE AMERICA MORE PROSPEROUS

Exchange programs make America more prosperous by bringing economic resources to American communities. U.S. Department of State exchange programs are a cost-effective investment that not only enhance America's long-term competitiveness but also provide significant and immediate economic impact in communities across the country. 90% of the exchange program budget is spent on Americans or in America and all 50 States host international exchange visitors, who support the local economy during their stay.

Among many other areas, this appropriation supports 430+ EducationUSA Student Advising Centers worldwide, fostering the flow of 1,126,690 international students to U.S. universities and colleges in the 2023–24 academic year. These students who were enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities across the U.S. contributed $43.8 billion to the U.S. economy and supported nearly 400,000 jobs, according to NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Due to the greater global challenges the U.S. is currently facing, it is more important than ever to sustain international people-to-people exchanges so that these programs may reach new audiences and participants and share American values worldwide. Support from Congress allows the U.S. Department of State to strategically align its programs with key U.S. foreign policy interests and to facilitate exchange experiences for more than 55,000 American and international exchange participants each year, including:

—Bringing emerging and future leaders to the U.S. on programs like the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program between the U.S. and countries with significant Muslim populations; the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program for high school students from Eurasia; the Young Leaders Initiatives in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Americas; and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP);
—Expanding opportunities for young Americans to study abroad through programs like the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program;
—Continuing to engage students and scholars through the renowned Fulbright Program;
—Engaging and training young professionals through programs such as the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX); and
—Broadening engagement with youth, women and girls, as well as program alumni.

This comprehensive approach to exchanges has been very effective in advancing our Nation's strategic interests and should be maintained.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to express our support for funding of $741 million in Fiscal Year 2026 for U.S. Department of State educational and cultural exchange programs. It is extremely important that this subcommittee push back forcefully against the President's wholly inadequate budget request for ECA in FY26 and continue ECA's funding at its current level in a bipartisan way. We look forward to working with the subcommittee to ensure that international exchange programs continue to play a vital role in making the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Mark Overmann, Executive Director.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALLIANCE FOR PEACEBUILDING

The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP), a leading nonpartisan network of 235+ organizations working in 181 countries to prevent and reduce violent conflict and build sustainable peace, respectfully requests Congress robustly fund key peacebuilding and conflict and atrocity prevention accounts in the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) foreign assistance appropriations bill.

U.S. foreign assistance, particularly conflict prevention and peacebuilding programming, doesn't just save lives—it makes America safer, stronger, and more pros-

perous. Additionally, prevention-oriented foreign assistance across the development and humanitarian sectors can reduce U.S. need to spend resources and support U.S. strategic efforts, while promoting stability and prosperity around the world. As costly, acute crises and conflicts are prevented and reduced, more resources can be devoted to other U.S. national security, political, and economic objectives that stem threats to the homeland and advance domestic priorities. Notably, conflict prevention assistance is proven to save American taxpayer money—every dollar invested in conflict prevention saves up to $103 that would otherwise be spent on expensive humanitarian or security responses. Put simply, small investments in peacebuilding bring significant returns, and cuts to peacebuilding programming and funding put these returns at risk.

Unfortunately, global violent conflict is at record-breaking levels and increasing. The world is currently experiencing 59 active State-based conflicts—the most since the end of World War II—and the successful resolution of conflicts is lower than at any point in the last 50 years. Fueled by violent conflict and crisis, the number of displaced people reached an all-time high of 122 million people in 2025. Today, 305 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and by 2030, two-thirds of the global poor will live in conflict-affected and fragile States. At his confirmation hearing, Secretary of State Rubio said, "Preventing crises is a lot cheaper and a lot better than dealing with crises after the fact." In recent years, Congress has made important strides by passing a prevention-oriented canon of law, including the Global Fragility Act (GFA), the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Act, and the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act (EWGAPA). These bipartisan initiatives, signed into law by President Trump, and the subsequent appropriations provided by Congress, equip the U.S. Government with tools, frameworks, and resources to reform foreign assistance, making aid more efficient and bringing greater returns home for every investment spent overseas. Such an approach can help the U.S. outmaneuver its geopolitical competitors and create a cadre of long-term allies and partners to advance U.S. interests and peace and security globally.

During the early days of the Trump Administration, sweeping cancellations of foreign assistance grants and contracts created a void for U.S. competitors to fill, and undermined U.S. national security and interests, including anti-terrorism programs in Somalia, efforts to repatriate former Islamic State members in Iraq and Syria, and counternarcotics programs in Colombia. In addition, the gutting of U.S. foreign aid had profound domestic impacts, with tens of thousands of American jobs lost in 46 States and Washington, DC. The damaging changes to U.S. foreign policy and assistance usurped Congress' appropriations authority and undermined the implementation of the statutory requirements of key bipartisan, prevention-oriented laws, namely the GFA, WPS Act, EWGAPA, and as a result, U.S. national interests.

Additionally, in May, Secretary of State Marco Rubio notified Congress of an updated reorganization of the State Department that proposes an 18% reduction of staff and eliminates key structures that advance conflict and atrocity prevention, including the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI), and the Office of Global Criminal Justice (GCJ). With the elimination of these bureaus and offices, it is essential to retain conflict expertise and staffing in other Department entities in order to elevate conflict and atrocity prevention and accountability throughout the Department and U.S. foreign policy and programs. The reorganization is occurring at the same time as the effective closure of USAID, and the State Department will take over all foreign assistance programming moving forward. However, while the State Department will now have more responsibility, the President's Budget Request for FY26 proposes draconian cuts to the State and International Programs account, amounting to an 83.7 percent decrease compared to current funding levels. These cuts will mean the State Department will have to do more with less.

At his inaugural address in January, President Trump stated, "We will measure our success not only by the battles we win, but also by the wars that we end and, perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into. My proudest legacy will be that of a peacemaker and unifier." If the U.S. Government is serious about tackling one of the greatest challenges of our time—increasing violent conflict and violence-as it rebuilds its foreign assistance, it must robustly integrate and center conflict prevention and peacebuilding within all development and humanitarian assistance programs. Furthermore, the U.S. must capitalize on the groundbreaking foreign assistance and diplomacy reforms outlined in the GFA. AfP requests that Congress reassert its constitutional authority and fully fund the accounts below to robustly support conflict and atrocities prevention and peacebuilding activities:

International Affairs Budget (Function 150).—This account serves as the overall international affairs budget for the U.S. Government. Foreign aid-which consists of vital international development, peacebuilding, security, and humanitarian assist-

ance-comprises 70% of the 150 foreign assistance account. Foreign assistance constitutes less than 1% of the overall Federal budget. Given the critical role foreign assistance plays in advancing U.S. national security, saving taxpayer money, benefiting the U.S. economy, and supporting U.S. strategic competition efforts, AfP recommends Congress appropriate at least $60 billion annually.

Atrocities Prevention Fund.—This fund enables the State Department to prevent atrocities, in furtherance of the EWGAPA, including by implementing recommendations of civil society and the Atrocity Prevention Task Force. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $25 million annually.

Atrocities Prevention Training.—Atrocities prevention training funds the instruction of officials serving in countries experiencing or at-risk of mass atrocities, as mandated in EWGAPA. The U.S. Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities clearly identifies that "for the U.S. Government to identify, prevent, and respond to atrocities effectively, U.S. Government personnel must be trained to recognize and report on early warning indicators and escalatory risk, as well as potential U.S. interventions." While the Strategy calls for "each U.S. department and agency [to be] responsible for developing and providing relevant atrocity prevention training and guidance to its personnel," in FY24, only the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor received such funding, despite the continued need at other implementing agencies. To ensure the conduct of atrocities prevention training across key agencies operationalizing EWGAPA, AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $1 million annually.

Complex Crises Fund (CCF).—The CCF supports GFA implementation and allows the U.S. Government to prevent and respond to emerging or unforeseen crises with flexible funding. CCF is a tool for the U.S. Government to direct resources to countries or regions that demonstrate a high or escalating risk of conflict, atrocities, instability, or unanticipated opportunities for progress in fragile democracies. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $75 million annually.

Conflict and Stabilization Operations.—The Conflict and Stabilization Operations account supports the work of the CSO, which delivers technical expertise and advanced data analytics tools that help to prevent and resolve conflicts. CSO also deploys stabilization advisors and works alongside partners across the Department of State, Department of Defense, and USAID. Additionally, CSO serves as Secretariat for the Atrocity Prevention Task Force—as outlined in the 2022 United States Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities—and is the lead coordinating agency for implementation of the GFA and U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $16.1 million annually.

Contributions to International Organizations.—Multilateralism has long been a pillar of U.S. foreign policy and when violent conflict happens anywhere, it can spread and disrupt peace everywhere. The Contributions to International Organizations account supports the UN regular budget and more than 40 international organizations. Investing in this account can strengthen cost-effective multilateral efforts in peace negotiations and mediation across sectors, ultimately cultivating shared responsibility for peace across the international community. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $1.725 billion annually.

Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities.—Another crucial component of U.S. support to the UN is through funding for peacekeeping missions. As of February 2025, there are 11 UN peacekeeping operations globally, consisting of 72,000 personnel. Research demonstrates that these missions are extremely effective at protecting civilians from violence, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and supporting democratic processes and the rule of law. Given the disruptive role of Russia, China, and other actors at the UN and on the global stage more broadly, U.S. commitment to cost-effective multilateral action to reduce civilian casualties, prevent conflict, and build peace—especially international peacekeeping activities—is more critical than ever. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $2.745 billion annually.

Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF), State Department.—This account functions as a "venture capital fund," enabling the State Department to respond quickly and flexibly to changing needs and opportunities to advance democracy and promote human rights. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $250 million annually.

Peacebuilding in Israel-Palestine.—The spike in violence amid the Israel-Hamas war has driven great need for an inclusive, long-term solution for peace in the region. The 2020 Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act (MEPPA) authorized $250 million for the People-to-People Partnership for Peace Fund over 5 years to promote peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians, encourage

economic development, and advance a sustainable two-state solution. Given MEPPA's impending sunset, AfP recommends the Administration request $50 million for peacebuilding funding in Israel-Palestine annually.

People-to-People Reconciliation Fund.—This fund supports "people-to-people" conflict mitigation and reconciliation programs. These programs bring together diverse individuals of different ethnic, religious, class, or political backgrounds from areas of civil conflict for meaningful engagement to prevent further violence and promote peace and stability. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $40 million annually.

Prevention and Stabilization Fund (PSF).—The PSF allows the State Department and USAID to support the stabilization of conflict-affected areas and counter global fragility, including through implementation of the GFA. This account should not only support GFA programs, but also operational, management, monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities related to implementation. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $200 million annually.

Transition Initiatives.—This fund supports USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). OTI addresses opportunities and challenges in countries in crisis and assists in their transitions to promote stability, peace, good governance, and democracy. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $120 million annually.

United States Institute of Peace (USIP).—USIP is an independent, nonpartisan institution created by an act of Congress and charged with increasing U.S. capacity to prevent, mitigate, and resolve international conflict without violence. For 40 years, USIP has played a vital role in preparing U.S. diplomats for peace negotiations, increasing the capacity of local stakeholders to participate in peace processes, and serving as a conduit between civil society and U.S. officials to improve U.S. foreign policy and advance U.S. national interests. AfP recommends Congress appropriate no less than $60 million annually.

Women, Peace, and Security.—The bipartisan WPS Act of 2017 recognized that women's involvement in decision-making led to more durable peace agreements and stable societies and sought to ensure women's meaningful leadership and participation in peace, security, and political processes around the world. While Congress has rightly increased WPS appropriations for the last several years, it has been discretionary. Dedicated resources to a distinct WPS fund will ensure robust resources for programs, personnel, training, and other measures, materials, and initiatives that encourage women's engagement in governance, peacebuilding, transition, relief, and recovery processes within partner governments and civil society, as well as multilateral institutions and security cooperatives. AfP recommends Congress provide no less than $300 million annually.

[This statement was submitted by Liz Hume, Executive Director.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record in support of sustained Federal investments in foreign assistance to support children's health and wellbeing in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 and beyond. AAP urges Congress to put children first when considering short and long-term Federal spending decisions, as children are uniquely vulnerable during global challenges, crises, and shocks. Investments in the health and development of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults can lay the foundation for healthier, stable, and resilient communities that can withstand future challenges.

The AAP supports the appropriations of $60 billion for FY2026 for the International Affairs Budget, including $1.695 billion for foreign assistance Operating Expenses; $300 million for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; $31.5 million for the Vulnerable Children account; $4.779 billion for International Disaster Assistance; and $3.930 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance. Additionally, the AAP supports bill language directing 10 percent of bilateral HIV funding within the Department of State be provided to Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

The AAP also urges Congress to ensure that FY 2024 and FY 2025 appropriated funds are spent by agencies as directed by Congress. As such, the AAP encourages Congress not to codify any cuts to foreign assistance programming proposed in the Rescissions Act of 2025.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS BUDGET

FY26 Request: $60 billion; FY24 enacted: $60 billion.—U.S. foreign assistance plays a critical role in advancing global child survival, health, and development. Thanks to U.S. leadership, more children are reaching their fifth birthday than ever before. In addition to saving lives abroad, investments in global health and immunization programs support countries to better respond to disease outbreaks by equipping them with life-saving vaccines, diagnostics, and treatments, which help stop illnesses before they reach the U.S. For example, earlier this year U.S. investment in global disease surveillance and bird migration tracking provided early warnings about avian influenza (bird flu), helping to protect U.S. poultry and dairy sectors and limit the risk of domestic transmission. Without this kind of timely global intervention, outbreaks like bird flu threaten the safety of domestic food supply, compromising access to food for children and families in the U.S. Investments in foreign assistance also support children to grow up strong and healthy, better positioning them to contribute to their communities and economies locally and globally, and reducing out migration. When economies thrive, countries become self-reliant and transform from recipients of aid to future trading partners.

OPERATING EXPENSES FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

FY26 Request: $1.695 billion; FY24 enacted: $1.695 billion.—Operating Expenses for foreign assistance are used to hire a Civil Service and Foreign Service workforce to ensure that the agency has the staffing it needs to advance critical foreign assistance programs, defend U.S. national security, and advance stability globally. The Civil Service and Foreign Service workforce safeguards American security by addressing disease outbreaks before they reach American shores, equipping countries with life-saving vaccines, diagnostics and treatments. Most recently, foreign assistance staff helped to contain outbreaks of Marburg in Tanzania and Ebola in Uganda. Additionally, these staff provide timely, relevant, and impactful oversight of all U.S. foreign assistance programs, ensuring strong stewardship and accountability of U.S. taxpayer dollars.

GAVI, THE VACCINE ALLIANCE

FY26 Request: $300 million; FY24 enacted: $300 million.—Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance supports over half of the world's children—1.1 billion—to receive routine immunizations. The U.S. does not fund Gavi alone; instead, Gavi uses a catalytic model that incentivizes investment from other donors, country governments, and the private sector. Gavi's model requires recipient countries to increase their financial contributions as their economies grow, setting up countries to become self-reliant and fund their own immunization programs. Most importantly for the U.S., Gavi helps prevent outbreaks at their source, delivering immunizations for diseases like malaria, polio, and measles. However, without U.S. support, Gavi's global immunization efforts will face major setbacks and threaten U.S. biosecurity. If the U.S. were to stop funding Gavi, over the next 5 years an estimated 75 million children will miss out on routine vaccinations and more than 1.2 million children are estimated to die as a result. Rolling back U.S. support for Gavi is highly likely to lead to exponentially larger outbreaks of measles in the U.S., as most outbreaks occur after recent travel overseas, placing additional strain on the U.S. health care and public health system.

VULNERABLE CHILDREN

FY 26 Request: $31.5 million; FY 24 enacted: $31.5 million.—In passing the Global Child Thrive Act in 2021, Congress recognized the need to integrate early childhood development interventions into U.S. foreign assistance programs to ensure children have the tools they need to survive and thrive. The AAP appreciates continued funding in FY26 for the Vulnerable Children Account, which supports the care and protection of vulnerable children around the globe via three priorities: early childhood development programs, keeping children in family-based care, and supporting interventions that prevent violence against children. These programs are beneficial to the U.S. as they support countries on their journey to self-reliance. Funding from this account catalyzes both country-level and other donor support to ensure low-and-middle- income countries can sustainably finance, manage, and deliver services that lead to stable, resilient, and prosperous families and communities. Additionally, these investments support programs which reduce violence against children—a root cause of migration. Addressing root causes of migration not only results in less suffering and better health outcomes in recipient countries, but

it also reduces out migration to the United States and lessens the burden on our immigration system.

INTERNATIONAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE (IDA)

FY 26 Request: $4.779 billion; FY 24 enacted: $4.779 billion.—The needs of children affected by emergencies have reached an unprecedented scale. In 2024, an estimated 473 million children—more than 1 in 6—lived in areas affected by armed conflict. Over 47% of these children have been forcibly displaced. International Disaster Assistance (IDA) is the primary mechanism that provides critical humanitarian assistance to civilian populations in response to natural disasters, conflict and insecurity, and other sudden-onset emergencies. IDA funding is uniquely designed for rapid, flexible response to crises wherever they occur, allowing the U.S. to respond immediately in unstable regions. These funds support a range of humanitarian assistance to save lives including emergency food assistance, nutrition, water, shelter, health care, protection, and agricultural rehabilitation. Sustained funding for International Disaster Assistance reduces the risk of regional collapse and builds capacity for disaster management and mitigation for future crises, limiting the need for more costly U.S. engagement down the line.

MIGRATION AND REFUGEE ASSISTANCE (MRA)

FY 26 Request: $3.930 billion; FY 24 enacted: $3.930 billion.—As complex conflicts increase in frequency and severity, the needs of children affected by emergencies have reached an unprecedented scale. At the end of 2024, nearly 49 million children globally were displaced, underscoring the need for sustained MRA funding. The Department of State's MRA account helps meet the basic needs of displaced people, supports sustainable and dignified solutions to their displacement, and assists countries hosting them. Additionally, MRA funds help manage migration in the Western Hemisphere, including irregular migration from Central America to the United States. Prioritizing MRA funding now reduces long-term migration pressures later, enhances regional security along major migration routes, and builds more stable allies of the U.S.

DIRECT THAT 10 PERCENT OF OVERALL BILATERAL HIV FUNDING BE PROVIDED TO ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

FY 26 Bill Language Request: Direct 10 Percent of Overall Bilateral HIV Funding be Provided to Orphans and Vulnerable Children, in Line With the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003.—For the last 22 years, Congress has set aside 10 percent of bilateral HIV funding to support socioeconomic programs that protect and care for children who are living with, have been orphaned by, or at risk of HIV. In March, PEPFAR reauthorization lapsed, which ended the statutory requirement for the 10 percent set aside, cutting off Orphans and Vulnerable Children from receiving basic services they depend on to navigate the threat of HIV. This setback comes at a time when the number of children who have lost one or both parents due to AIDS has grown from 12.4 million when PEPFAR was created to 14.1 million in 2023. While HIV is no longer a death sentence, it continues to impact all aspects of a child's life including their mental and physical health, nutrition, and education. Restoring the 10 percent set aside of bilateral HIV funds for Orphans and Vulnerable Children through the appropriations process is essential to ensure continuity of care and stability for these at-risk children, including access to good nutrition, education, and mental health support. To date, these programs have protected and mitigated the impact of HIV on 6.6 million orphans and vulnerable children, helping them reach their full potential and become healthy adults who can contribute to their communities. Investing in these children helps to stabilize countries that can become future trading partners of the U.S, while fostering diplomatic partnerships that advance U.S. national interests.

The American Academy of Pediatrics looks forward to working with Congress in FY2026 and beyond to adequately fund lifesaving foreign assistance programs for vulnerable children and their families.

[This statement was submitted by Jeff Hild, Senior Vice President, Advocacy.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and Members of the subcommittee:

My name is William R. Bay, President of the American Bar Association (ABA). Thank you, on behalf of the association, for this opportunity to reiterate the impor-

tance of continuing U.S. support for promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law around the world.

The ABA is committed to standing up for the rule of law at home and abroad. As a nonpartisan organization founded in 1878, the ABA's mission and goals are rooted in promoting the rule of law, defending liberty, and pursuing justice in the United States and around the world. Through the ABA Center for Global Programs (CGP), working with the U.S. Government and a range of local actors, we have helped spread these intrinsic American values in over 100 countries for 35 years. Our current efforts are led by our experienced professional staff and volunteers. Retired Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer serves as the chair of our Board of volunteers supervising this work.

Global events continue to highlight that we live in a world where the promotion of our democratic values and the rule of law is more important than ever. This is recognized by the American people. According to the ABA's 2025 Survey of Civic Literacy, 54% of survey respondents said the U.S. should be involved in promoting democracy and the rule of law globally (https://www.americanbar.org/news/reporter__resources/civic-knowledge-survey/).

The ABA appreciates that there has long been bipartisan agreement in Congress that programs to promote the rule of law internationally are valuable and cost-effective investments of U.S. taxpayer dollars that enhance both the national security and economic prosperity of our Nation. In short, support for these programs is consistent with our values and interests as a Nation.

Countries with weak or deficient respect for the rule of law invariably suffer a variety of ills, and their populations are left without the tools to address these challenges. When the rule of law is healthy and robust, governments can systematically address a wide array of issues-corruption, cybersecurity, organized crime, and terrorism, to name a few. Funding for rule of law assistance is a force multiplier for the U.S. government because, when countries enhance the strength of rule of law, their populations are empowered to enforce their own rights, grow their economies, and effectively utilize the assistance they receive, all of which helps foster stability. That stability in turn helps to protect the United States' national security and economic interests around the world.

As a long-time implementer of U.S. foreign assistance programs, the ABA can attest that America receives significant returns on this investment. For more than three decades, the ABA CGP has been protecting human rights, promoting justice, and advancing economic opportunity in accordance with U.S. foreign policy interests. We have consistently received U.S. Government funding to implement these programs during both Republican and Democratic administrations, and each of these programs was awarded to the ABA through a rigorous, competitive procurement process that was responsive to Congressional appropriations and U.S. Government policies. We are proud of this longstanding partnership with the U.S. Government that has helped many nations transition from repressive governments opposed to our interests to willing allies working in concert with them.

Founded just after the fall of the Berlin Wall, our early efforts focused on assisting Eastern European countries in drafting constitutions and laws. The program also helped embolden judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and legal educators to take the lead in establishing—or in some cases re-establishing—the rule of law after decades of communism and repression. The early model of American lawyers offering probono services in developing democracies remains at the heart of our global programs. For example, lawyers, law firms, and other experts have contributed more than $300 million in pro bono support for our programs since their inception.

Through the CGP and other initiatives, the ABA has a framework in place to respond to requests for assistance from every region of the world and can provide expertise in virtually every area of law, including combating trafficking in persons, fighting corruption, reforming judicial systems, ensuring access to justice, and defending individual rights. Our programs work in close cooperation with host country government institutions and civil society organizations that include bar associations, judicial training institutes, ministries of justice, law schools, police, United Nations missions, and an array of nongovernmental organizations. Over the past 5 years, CGP has provided legal assistance to more than 160,000 people, trained or assisted 20,000 justice sector actors, and supported over 100 legal aid clinics worldwide. In 2024, CGP implemented over 100 programs in more than 40 countries in every region of the world with funding from the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and other multilateral donors and private foundations.

However, the majority of this programming has now ground to a halt. As you know, the President on January 20, 2025 issued an Executive Order on "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid" which initially paused, then quickly terminated, vast amounts of foreign assistance funding, with significant harm to

Americans, businesses, and our friends and allies abroad. Hundreds of organizations, global partners, and communities most at risk from increased threats now face heightened peril. Our work was forced to stop abruptly, without any protection for these vulnerable populations. The victims are not just vague numbers or statistics, but real men, women, and children who suffer in silence because they suddenly lack access to justice and legal services. This vulnerable population also includes the judges and lawyers who risk their lives to defend justice, protect freedom, and uphold the rule of law.

As a result of the Executive Order, 83 ABA CGP programs received "stop work" notifications and have now received notifications of termination. These terminations appeared arbitrary, and they included a range of programs that are clearly consistent with the administration's stated priority of making America safer, stronger and more prosperous.

Here is a small sample of the ABA CGP programs that have been terminated:

Justice Sector Training, Research, and Coordination Program (JUSTRAC).—JUSTRAC was funded by the Department of State in 2018, pursuant to the first Trump Administration's "Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety" Executive Order, to improve the cost effectiveness of the rule of law programs, primarily focused on countering transnational and organized crime. Implemented in cooperation with the Rule of Law Collaborative at the University of South Carolina, JUSTRAC creates training programs that unite public and private organizations with U.S. government agencies and analyzes the impact and cost-effectiveness of existing programs, both internationally and within the United States.

Healing and Accountability through Human Rights in Ukraine.—CGP was helping Ukraine build its capacity to document, investigate, and prosecute war crimes and ensure that perpetrators of war crimes are held to account. This, in turn, helps to create a stable and prosperous Ukraine to seek reconciliation in previously occupied areas and fully reintegrate communities liberated from Russian occupation, internally displaced persons, returned refugees, survivors of violence, and veterans.

Professionalizing the Judicial Sector in the Central African Republic.—CGP addressed a driver of continued instability in the Central African Republic through the provision of legal aid clinics for victims and vulnerable populations in five cities. Through these clinics, attorneys provided direct legal assistance, mediation, psycho-social service referrals, and case follow-up.

Reducing Transnational Crime in El Salvador.—CGP worked to combat corruption and illicit financing to strengthen democratic institutions and reduce transnational crime in El Salvador.

Improving Judicial Reform in Georgia.—CGP supported the implementation of justice reforms in Georgia to improve the independence, transparency, accountability, and efficiency of core justice institutions, service providers, and actors. This work included placing U.S. judges in Georgian courts to observe and assist their Georgian counterparts, to introduce new case and court management practices, and to enhance greater judicial independence.

Strengthening Human Rights Protections in Libya.—CGP supported the creation of a digital help desk that provides assistance to local organizations, human rights defenders, and journalists in response to rising safety concerns, threats, and attacks.

Supporting Justice Defenders Worldwide.—CGP worked with human rights defenders worldwide who faced ongoing harassment, threats, and criminal charges in retaliation for their legitimate human rights work through pro bono legal support and trial monitoring.

The ABA recognizes that every new administration has the right to review programs and make adjustments based on its priorities. There may be legitimate debate of on how much foreign aid should be appropriated and for what purpose—that is the prerogative of Congress. But the sudden and substantial withdrawal of U.S. funding for programs such as the above, which focus on strengthening the institutions and processes that underpin the rule of law, impedes our Nation's ability to combat terrorism and corruption, promote economic development, and enhance democratic governance around the world.

We understand that Congress faces many competing budgetary demands and appreciate this subcommittee's past support for funding Democracy, Human Rights and Governance programming. The United States has been able to play a critical leadership role in the world because it has, over multiple administrations of both

parties, maintained a values-based foreign policy that advances the conditions for a peaceful and prosperous world.

Failure to sustain and provide funding for this work risks ceding our leadership position to those who would remake the global order in ways that clearly will not serve our Nation's interests. Supporting governments, legal structures, and institutions based on the rule of law is a necessary prerequisite to establishing resilient democratic societies and successful market-based economies. Programs such as those outlined above have proven to be cost-effective means to advance both the interests of individuals in participating countries and the strategic interests of the United States. We urge you to continue to support funding for them in Fiscal Year 2026.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share the views of the American Bar Association.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the more than 90,000 members of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony addressing fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations. The ACS is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and improve the quality of care for all surgical patients. The ACS is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery. Its achievements have significantly influenced the course of scientific surgery in America and have established it as an important advocate for all surgical patients.

In line with ACS' dedication to global surgical access, the ACS Health Outreach Program for Equity in Global Surgery (ACS HOPE) is taking proactive steps to bridge the gaps in surgical access worldwide. Our focus extends beyond borders, emphasizing the needs of both the United States and international low-resourcing settings. With a strong emphasis on collaboration and community-based programming, we strive to improve surgical access and provide optimal surgical care to medically underserved communities. As such, ACS respectfully requests your consideration of the following as the subcommittee works through the annual appropriations process for FY 2026:

Inclusion of $10 million for Neglected Surgical Conditions

Each year, global deaths from conditions requiring surgical care far exceed those from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria—combined. However, the burden of conditions requiring surgical intervention continues to be neglected as a public health strategy. By directing $10 million through the State Department, the U.S. can lead the effort to transform health systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), which has the potential to save 17 million lives per year and avert $12.3 trillion in lost gross domestic product in LMICs over the next 15 years. The investment in surgical systems also supports pandemic preparedness plans as the increased capacity can be repurposed for treatment capacity during pandemics.

The World Bank identified essential surgical care as one of the most cost-effective health interventions available and a health priority that is within reach for countries around the world. Additionally, World Health Assembly adopted a resolution in 2015, co-sponsored by the U.S., that acknowledged surgery and anesthesia as key components to strengthening health systems. As a result, all 16 member countries of the Southern African Development Community and all 26 countries of the Pacific Community are moving ahead to strengthen surgical systems and are developing national strategic plans. In 2020, all 37 countries of the World Health Organization Western Pacific Region unanimously adopted a framework for action for safe and affordable surgery in the region. These LMICs are determined to fill the currently unmet surgical gap of 143 million additional operations by the end of the decade, and the U.S. has an opportunity to lead this global surgery movement.

Language recognizing the importance of strengthening capacity to address neglected surgical conditions was included in the FY 2021, FY 2022, FY2023, and FY2024 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) Reports. We appreciate your past leadership and support, and urge you to consider the following report language for FY 2026:

> *Neglected Surgical Conditions—The agreement includes $10,000,000 to strengthen surgical health capacity to address such health issues as cleft lip and cleft palate, club foot, cataracts, hernias, fistulas, and untreated traumatic injuries in underserved areas in developing countries, including in*

contexts without water or electricity. Strengthening surgical health systems includes the training of local surgical teams to provide safe, sustainable, and timely surgical care, and assisting ministries of health to develop and implement national surgical, obstetric, trauma, and anesthesia plans.

Including the proposed language in the FY 2026 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Report signifies a strong commitment and investment in global surgical care. Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Hallie Koch at hkoch@facs.org if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Patricia L. Turner, MD, MBA, FACS
Executive Director and CEO

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMERICAN COUNCILS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: ACTR/ACCELS

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the subcommittee on behalf of American Councils for International Education. I am writing to request support for a number of Department of State programs that are carried out in the National security interests of the United States. Exchange programs funded through the Educational and Cultural Exchange programs are a vital component to strengthening the National security of the United States and supporting U.S. international leadership. I am requesting that the subcommittee recommend funding in the fiscal year 2026 State, Foreign Operations bill of at least $778 million for programs under the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). Further, I ask that funding within ECA be provided at the amount of $115 million for Citizen Exchange Programs and that the Critical Languages Scholarship program be funded at a level of $9 million. I further ask that funding of at least $3.0 million be included for Research and Training for Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union Program.

This is a time of organizational changes at the Department of State and clarifications of Executive branch priorities. I want to stress how the programs I am addressing meet the criteria of advancing the National security of the United States and serve the priorities of Congress and the Administration.

The complexities of the current geopolitical crises in Ukraine and the Middle East and the ongoing political unrest in South Asia and the Horn of Africa demonstrate the critical importance of exchange programs and the vital channel they provide the United States for engaging people and communities throughout the world in strategic partnerships that serve America's interests both now and in the years to come.

Educational and cultural exchange programs funded through the Department of State Educational and Cultural Exchange program are authorized under the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. These programs are implemented through academic, cultural, sports, and professional exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships.

Exchange programs funded through the Educational and Cultural Exchange programs are a vital component to strengthening the National security of the United States and supporting U.S. international leadership.

These programs promote America's business and political interests abroad and advance U.S. democratic values, reaching a wide range of students, educators, and young professionals. Many of these foreign participants go on to leadership roles and maintain thc connections forged during their time in the U.S.

Americans who have benefited from State Department funding go on to careers using those languages they studied and knowledge of the cultures they explored, including many who subsequently work in the State Department, Department of Defense, and Department of Homeland Security. Exchange programs have been clearly shown to be an important, highly cost-effective public diplomacy tool as well as a training opportunity for those who represent and defend our country.

The U.S. is a global leader in delivering these important programs. However, the U.S. is not without competition in this arena. China actively promotes competing outreach initiatives around the world. Recent data shows that while U.S. spending for these programs has remained flat, China has increased its spending ten-fold over the last decade (data from Center for Strategic and International Studies), clearly indicating their assessment of the effectiveness of the investment. The U.S. must maintain its primacy in this area.

As President of American Councils for International Education, I have the privilege of overseeing one of the leading nonprofit organizations administering U.S. Government and privately funded exchange and educational development programs in areas critical to U.S. interests around the globe. Exchange programs promote democracy and work to build positive, productive relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

Leaders in more than 120 countries around the world, in both government and business, have come to share strong pro-Western values, thanks to exchanges.

EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES (ECE)

No instrument is more cost-effective than American outreach through exchanges to the rising generation of young leaders and professionals. Exchanges provide a significant long-term multiplier effect at relatively low cost, as alumni later rise to increasingly important roles in government and the private sector.

Citizen Exchanges give American and foreign participants the opportunity to gain knowledge and share their expertise and experience through professional, youth, cultural, and sports exchange programs.

The Future Leader Exchange (FLEX) program brings about 800 students from countries of the former Soviet Union, Ukraine and Central and Eastern Europe through a merit-based competitive process to the U.S. for a high school academic year. With over 30,000 alumni in positions of responsibility in government, business, and education, FLEX plays an essential and critical role in fostering democratic values and positive views toward the United States, as well as creating opportunities for partnerships in all sectors.

The Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES) fosters greater understanding between the United States and countries of critical interest to the U.S. and is an important part of U.S. foreign policy. The YES program brings approximately 800 students from approximately 35 countries to the U.S. each school year and plays a critical role in achieving this objective.

The Critical Language Scholarships program is an essential part of the U.S. national security effort to expand the number of Americans studying and mastering foreign languages. These languages are less commonly taught in the United States but are essential to America's engagement in the world. Languages include Russian, Chinese, Farsi, Arabic, Korean, Indonesian, and others. More than 90% of participants indicate an increase in job skills as a result of participation in Critical Language Scholarships programs.

Foreign language capability dramatically boosts U.S. capacity to operate around the world, both in collaboration with our friends and allies and, where necessary, in competition with our adversaries. Funding at a level of $9 million annually will enable CLS program resources to match in constant dollar support the level of funding of the program's initial implementation. The need for these resources is evident, both in terms of the additional languages deemed critical by the State Department and the increasingly challenging global environment in which State Department and other U.S. government national security professionals operate around the world.

EASTERN EUROPE AND THE INDEPENDENT STATES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

I am requesting the Committee provide report language and funding at the previously congressionally recommended level of $3.0 million for the Program for Research and Training on Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union. The request is also to continue current bill language under the section for "General Provisions."

The Research and Training on Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union Title VIII program was signed into law by President Reagan in 1983. These programs support U.S. national security interest by providing Americans funding to pursue advanced research and fieldwork and develop essential linguistic capacities for policymaking challenges emanating from Russia, Ukraine, and the turbulent border regions.

The purpose of the Research and Training on Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union (referred to as Title VIII programs) is to raise the readiness levels of U.S. civilian and prospective government personnel for understanding, analyzing, and dealing effectively with a new generation of cyber, environmental, geopolitical, military, technological and political challenges emanating from Russian aggression and in the region as a whole.

This important program, focused on Eastern Europe and the successor States of the former Soviet Union ensures that the United States maintains vital national security expertise, linguistic capabilities, and knowledge of the region. This ensures that U.S. policymaking, conduct of relations, and engagement with this vital region

are informed and based on an up-to-date understanding of the situation on the ground across the region.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, exchanges are a critical, national security foreign policy tool. These programs provide a significant return on investment, particularly in a time of limited resources.

Therefore, I urge the subcommittee to provide the funding and report language I have outlined in this statement for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and for the program of Research and Training for Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union.

Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Lisa Choate, President and CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION (AFSA)

REGARDING THE STATE DEPARTMENT, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS BUDGET, AND U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE WORKFORCE

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 bills, AFSA is writing to respectfully request robust funding for the U.S. Foreign Service at the Department of State and the International Affairs Budget (IAB) as a whole. Maintaining a robust diplomatic capability and workforce is vital to preserving America's global leadership role.

Our nation needs missions with fully staffed teams of diplomats and development professionals in the field keeping threats at bay and safeguarding America's safety and prosperity-combating the conditions that enable terrorism to take root, protecting against pandemics, and promoting the rule of law and international rules and norms that level the playing field for U.S. companies to compete and thrive. Make no mistake; the FY26 request represents a full-blown retreat of our global leadership role and diplomatic prowess—at a time when it is needed more than ever.

AFSA strongly opposes the proposed draconian cuts to the Department of State and the International Affairs Budget (IAB) as a whole. We ask the subcommittees to reject the FY26 budget request and support the U.S. Foreign Service and its workforce with a robust allocation. The Foreign Service has a high return on investment for a tiny percentage of the overall budget. Its members build the relationships that enable Americans to conduct business around the world, keeping threats at bay and reducing the need for military action.

However, the FY26 President's Budget Request includes a total of just $9.6 billion for the State Department and international assistance programs. This amount assumes the approval of rescissions and represents an 85 percent cut below the FY25 level of $61.1 billion. Even without approval of $21.6 billion in rescinded funds, the requested number of just $31.2 billion would cut funding in half from FY25. The request also asks for an employment ceiling of 19,250 positions and a net decrease of 1,323 below the FY25 estimate, which includes members of the Civil Service and Foreign Service.

Meanwhile, the State Department reorganization already calls for a reduction-in-force (RIF) of up to 1,873 personnel assigned to domestic offices. Per the FY26 State Department Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ), "the restructuring is not reflected in the request." Without considering the reorganization, there is no way to accurately assess how the request would deplete our diplomatic capability. The CBJ also includes just $358.4 million for "the integration of certain foreign assistance functions and activities previously covered by USAID, enabling 217 direct hire positions and related support costs." At this point, there is no way of knowing whether these 217 positions will be enough to administer programs previously overseen by USAID and funded by Congress.

If the United States retreats diplomatically, given the reduction in funding, we leave a vacuum that will be filled by our rivals. State Department reporting has also made clear that susceptibility to PRC influence is high in countries without Senate-confirmed ambassadors. China now has more posts overseas than the U.S., and American diplomats are outnumbered five to one in African countries. As of June 12th, 2025, there were 106 U.S. ambassadorial vacancies around the world. In the face of aggressive competition, the opportunity costs of leaving American embassies short staffed and without confirmed, empowered ambassadors, including our experienced career ambassadors, are rapidly increasing. This retreat erodes our Nation's diplomatic power at our own peril.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) headquartered in Washington, DC and with thousands of advocates throughout the United States welcomes the opportunity to provide testimony regarding U.S. assistance and policy for the South Caucasus region generally and to Armenia and the Armenian people specifically for Fiscal Year 2026.

Over the decades, Congress and this Committee has played an instrumental role in shaping U.S. policy which not only saved lives and but also helped ensure that Armenia, the first Christian nation in the world, survived, of which the Assembly extends it gratitude and deep appreciation.

With that in mind, we urge Congress to help keep President Donald J. Trump's promise to "restore PEACE between Armenia and Azerbaijan" and "to stop the violence and ethnic cleansing" of Christian Armenians. Armenia has demonstrated its readiness and willingness to sign a peace agreement with Azerbaijan, of which Secretary of State Marco Rubio in March of this year commended "Armenia and Azerbaijan for concluding negotiations on a historic peace treaty," and further stated that: "This is an opportunity for both countries to turn the page on a decades old conflict in line with President Trump's vision for a more peaceful world. Now is the time to commit to peace, sign and ratify the treaty, and usher in a new era of prosperity for the people of the South Caucasus." As Secretary Rubio stated during the June 2025 NATO Summit, no one has sought Peace more than President Trump.

We also note and welcome the Final Statement of the International Conference on the Preservation of Armenian Religious, Cultural and Historical Heritage in Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh held under the auspices of the World Council of Churches on May 27–28, 2025, in Bern, Switzerland, which read in part: "As churches and religious communities, we believe that protecting heritage is not only about monuments—it is about the living expression of faith, identity, and memory. Religious leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Yezidi traditions joined voices at this conference to affirm that preserving religious heritage is an expression of our shared humanity and a path toward reconciliation. We underline the role of interfaith collaboration in healing, rebuilding trust, and promoting the dignity of all people affected by displacement, war, and cultural cleansing." Further, the statement urged "Governments and international bodies, particularly Switzerland where we are meeting today, to take diplomatic and legal steps based on OSCE and other conventions to prevent further erasure of Armenian cultural heritage, support the return of the people to their land and to work actively towards the liberation of the Armenian hostages in Baku."

While we remain hopeful about the prospects of peace, we are also cognizant of the difficult realities facing Armenia, which from our standpoint, has been negotiating under extreme duress with Azerbaijani soldiers illegally occupying Armenia and with Azerbaijan still unjustly holding Armenian hostages. Azerbaijan's autocratic ruler, Ilham Aliyev has even boasted that "we have destroyed Armenia," and warned Armenia to "never forget that the iron fist is in place and always will be." We also remain deeply troubled by the continued erasure of Armenian cultural heritage. Of course, true peace cannot be achieved until Azerbaijan ceases its sham trials and immediately releases all Armenian hostages, which includes the political leaders of Artsakh. In that regard, we urge Congress and the Administration to use every tool at its disposal to secure their freedom.

SECTION 907 OF THE FREEDOM SUPPORT ACT

Congress took a principled stand against Azerbaijani aggression with the adoption of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act in 1992. Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act States that U.S. funds "may not be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh." In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on American soil, a national security waiver was added to Section 907. The exercise of the waiver is valid so long as it "will not undermine or hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement" to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, or "be used for offensive purposes against Armenia." Given Azerbaijan's 44-day War against Artsakh in 2020, its repeated failure to abide by its international commitments, including a 2020 Agreement reached during the first Trump Administration, the 2023 military offensive against Artsakh driving the entire indigenous population from their ancestral homeland, Azerbaijan's ongoing destruction of Armenian cultural and religious heritage sites and the unjust holding of hostages, the Assembly urges that Section 907 of the FREE-

DOM Support Act continued to be enforced and that no U.S. taxpayer dollars be used to support Azerbaijan, including any U.S. military or security assistance.

SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO ARMENIA
(NOT LESS THAN $50 MILLION)

Armenia, a strategic partner with the United States continues to deepen relations with the West while still under great threat and peril. Thus, it is paramount that U.S. provide defensive weapons to further assist Armenia in protecting its people and defending its borders against ongoing Azerbaijani aggression. Last March during his visit to Armenia's capital, then NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg praised Armenia for its long-standing partnership and contributions to NATO stating: "For nearly 20 years, Armenia has been a key partner in NATO's KFOR peacekeeping mission, helping to ensure a safe and secure environment for all communities in Kosovo." Further, Secretary-General Stoltenberg also reiterated that "NATO supports Armenian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and your peaceful aspirations." More can be done to protect and defend Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ARMENIA
(NOT LESS THAN $250 MILLION)

On September 6, 2023, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission convened an emergency hearing, sounding the alarm on the impending catastrophe in Artsakh. The Commission heard expert testimony from Professor David L. Philips, Director of Columbia University's Artsakh Atrocities Project, and Luis Moreno Ocampo, former Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court. Mr. Ocampo testified that "there is a reasonable basis to believe that a genocide is being committed against Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023," and spoke of "the ongoing genocide by starvation." On September 14, 2023, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on Nagorno-Karabakh wherein a State Department Official stated, "the United States will not countenance any action or effort-short-term or long-term-to ethnically cleanse or commit other atrocities against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. The current humanitarian situation is not acceptable."

Despite these and similar warnings, just days later, on September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan—with the support of Turkey and in coordination with Russia—launched a military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh, resulting in the death and injury of innocent civilians and the forced displacement of some 120,000 indigenous Christian Armenians, including 30,000 children who fled to Armenia. This assault was the culmination of Azerbaijan's genocidal campaign against the Armenian people that started with the illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor in December 2022—during which regrettably the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act was not enforced—and placed the entire Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh under siege and threat of starvation. Section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 USC 2378–1), also known as the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, States that: "No assistance shall be furnished under this chapter or the Arms Export Control Act to any country when it is made known to the President that the government of such country prohibits or otherwise restricts, directly or indirectly, the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance." To address the ensuing humanitarian crisis caused by Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing, and to facilitate the right of return, the Assembly urges the subcommittee to allocate not less than $250 million, of which funds should be made available to Armenian American private voluntary organizations that have proven most cost effective. U.S. assistance can also play a role in preventing further genocide.

THE RIGHT OF RETURN

Ignoring the long-standing international peace process under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group (co-chaired by the United States, France, and Russia), of which the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh was to be determined, and violating the 1994 ceasefire agreed upon by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan ignited full-scale war against Artsakh and the Armenian people in September, 2020, and September, 2023 offensive. As a result, Armenians, having already faced a genocide in the 20th century, were forced yet again to leave their ancestral homeland. The entire population of Artsakh people were forcibly displaced from their homes, while hospitals, schools, and churches were destroyed by missiles, cluster and white phosphorus munitions, and drone strikes. The 2020 War, followed by the September 2023 ethnic cleansing

of Armenians from Artsakh upended decades of U.S. efforts and support for a peaceful resolution to the conflict on the basis of the Helsinki Principles.

Last November, Freedom House released a report "Why Are There No Armenians In Nagorno-Karabakh?" that examined "the situation for ethnic Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh for the period starting with the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020 and through the Azerbaijani military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 and its aftermath." Through an international fact-finding effort that included hundreds of witness interviews and open-source data, the Report "documents how people in Nagorno-Karabakh were intentionally subjected to regular attacks, intimidation, deprivation of basic rights and adequate living conditions, and forced displacement. The evidence demonstrates that the Azerbaijani state acted upon a comprehensive, methodically implemented strategy to empty Nagorno-Karabakh of its ethnic Armenian population and historical and cultural presence."

Sam Brownback, the former U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, during a June 2023 Congressional hearing on "Safeguarding the people of Nagorno-Karabakh," put it this way: "This is a question of the rights of the Armenian Christians of Nagorno-Karabakh: does this religious minority have a right to survival in their ancestral homeland? The only just answer is yes, they have the right not to be driven out, starved out or blockaded by the government of Azerbaijan." The Assembly urges Congress and the Administration to help ensure that the fundamental right of return as well as the fundamental principles of democracy, the right to self-determination, and the universal human rights of the people of Artsakh are upheld. Additionally, the United States can and must do more to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its gross human rights violations.

The Assembly also previously welcomed an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act that authorized "the President to impose sanctions on individuals accused of committing human rights abuses or engaging in corruption." The level of corruption and repression of the Aliyev regime in Azerbaijan is widely reported, whether the "Azerbaijani Laundromat" scheme with a $2.9 billion slush fund to whitewash its human rights record, or the "Pandora Papers" revelations exposing even further its wide-ranging scope. Further, based on credible reports that Azerbaijani forces committed gross human rights violations during and after the 44-day war, the Leahy Law and Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act should be implemented to hold Azerbaijan accountable. Azerbaijan should not be rewarded for its blatant and ongoing violations against the Armenian people. The Assembly strongly urges the inclusion of report language calling for the immediate release of all hostages held by Azerbaijan, including Artsakh's leaders who are being subjected to sham trials.

CONCLUSION

As Ambassador Brownback testified last Congress, Armenia is the "first Christian nation on Earth. Persecuted over several millennia by multiple empires, yet they remain. Their tenacity and sheer pluck inspire every religious minority around the world." History has shown that appeasing dictators only serves to further embolden them. Christians are among the most persecuted religious minorities around the world and are disappearing from the Middle East and other regions. The Assembly urges Congress and the Administration to stand with the Armenian people and to stand up for freedom and liberty; oppose genocide and hold Azerbaijan and its accomplices accountable.

[This statement was submitted by Mariam Khaloyan, Congressional Relations Director.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE ASIA FOUNDATION

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and Members of the subcommittee:

I am honored to submit this testimony on behalf of The Asia Foundation (TAF). We are deeply grateful for the confidence the Committee has shown in TAF. TAF is a non-profit, non-governmental organization established in 1954 and headquartered in San Francisco. An annual appropriation is authorized under The Asia Foundation Act of 1983 (22 USC 4402). The act acknowledges the importance of sustained funding for TAF and endorses its ongoing value and contributions to advancing U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific. We pledge to you that, with your continuing support, TAF will sustain and expand its impactful work on the frontlines of U.S. partnership with societies and governments across the Indo-Pacific. To build on Congress's long-term investment, The Asia Foundation is requesting $22,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2026, the same as enacted in FY 2024 and FY 2025.

For 70 years, TAF has maintained a unique presence and expertise, operating on the ground in more than 20 countries in Asia and the Pacific Islands through 17 country offices, including a regional Pacific office in Fiji.

Unfortunately, the Administration request for FY 2026 calls for no funding for The Asia Foundation. This would have a devastating effect on TAF and our continued ability to serve U.S. national security and economic interests in countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

The value of The Asia Foundation to the U.S. government and the Congress, as acknowledged since the passage of The Asia Foundation Act in 1983, lies in TAF's unique, sustained presence in the countries where we work. This has enabled us to be a deeply trusted partner in Asia and the Pacific, with key relationships with governments, civic institutions, and businesses.

TAF is a symbol of American presence in the Indo-Pacific region and, as a dependable partner to the United States, has a particular value to American policymakers. TAF has a distinctive ability to rapidly respond to opportunity and crisis, by establishing presence and programs immediately and, with official U.S. encouragement, at times even before official normalization of relations. Examples include Vietnam, Mongolia, and Timor Leste in the 1990's, Afghanistan immediately after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, and in Burma in 2014. More recently, TAF was encouraged by the State Department and Congress to expand into the Pacific in 2023, and, with additional appropriations, has rapidly built a solid foundation for programming, with a regional office in Fiji, and programs in 11 Pacific countries prior to program suspensions in January of this year.

TAF builds relationships with reform-minded individuals and organizations that merit our help as they seek to advance shared goals and interests. We are confident that the relationships we nurture and the capabilities we expand today will ensure future security cooperation, fair trade between the U.S. and the Indo-Pacific, and a stronger, more secure and more prosperous America.

TAF's programs spur economic growth and opportunities by fostering entrepreneurship, strengthening workforce skills, and supporting policy reforms to enable stable markets and expand investment and trade. TAF fights foreign information manipulation and interference, and counters cyber-security threats. TAF has partnered with Asian and Pacific governments and thousands of non-governmental organizations and businesses. TAF has supported many Asian and Pacific leaders who have had a positive influence on U.S. relations with the Indo-Pacific. TAF has special standing in Asia and the Pacific as a steady, reliable American partner that meets critical needs, and often achieves what direct official assistance cannot by collaborating with local groups. TAF's programs demonstrate to countries in the region the value of prioritizing partnership with the U.S.

Appropriated funding is critical to TAF' s ability to continue operating as an important American asset across the Indo-Pacific region. The loss of the Congressional appropriation would be devastating, damaging our ability to maintain our country offices or attract other donor resources. Making the most of and leveraging taxpayer dollars, TAF has diversified its funding, in recent years raising roughly four dollars from other sources for every dollar of direct appropriation received. TAF is an especially cost-effective investment for the Congress in a time of budget constraints especially because of our ability to leverage other non-U.S. resources.

Sufficient appropriated funding is essential to maintaining TAF's robust and persistent footprint across the Indo-Pacific, specifically in countries of priority interest to the United States. Trust is built on continuity and deep understanding of local context. No other organization has the long history, presence, and commitment of The Asia Foundation in critically important countries such as the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. TAF's regional office and programs in the Pacific Islands contribute to expanding American values in a priority area for the United States and countering external influences adverse to U.S. interests.

HOW IS THE ASIA FOUNDATION UNIQUE AMONG ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING IN THE INDO-PACIFIC?

The Asia Foundation is first and foremost a field-based organization. Through a cost-effective combination of grant-making and direct program operations managed by our teams permanently based in Asia and the Pacific, TAF maximizes program impact while keeping costs low. Our highly qualified teams in our country offices undertake policy-savvy research to inform pragmatic activities across the region, including perception surveys, surveys on conflict and violence, economic scorecards, and assessments regarding natural disaster relief and other critical issues. These

types of research and analysis enable us to craft and implement evidence-based solutions.

TAF works with private sector companies to spur economic growth and expand opportunities for American businesses. For instance, TAF has a longstanding partnership with Google.org on several tech priorities across many Indo-Pacific countries, including digital skills training for women and local communities and cybersecurity training for small businesses and organizations. TAF also has program partnerships with many other American companies to expand skills-based training from a regional platform in Malaysia, working with Mastercard, Cisco, DHL, Visa, Zendesk, AT&T, and Starbucks.

TAF promotes reform by providing training, technical assistance, support for pilot projects, and seed funding to hundreds of established and emerging Asian and Pacific partner organizations, as well as future leaders. These longstanding investments in human capital have paid off. TAF has important relationships with Asian and Pacific governments and leaders and strong links to local communities based on decades of ongoing engagement. Former TAF grantees have become leaders and change-makers in government, industry, academia, and civil society.

As country specialists, our staff based in Asia and the Pacific are a substantive resource for program partners and implementers. TAF also serves as a resource on political and economic trends and issues for U.S. Embassies across Asia and the Pacific, including in places where U.S. officials' movements and outreach have been circumscribed due to security concerns and staffing limitations.

TAF also frequently responds to U.S. Embassy requests for material for American Centers through TAF' s innovative digital and print library *Let's Read!* This freely accessible library fills an important void in advancing childhood literacy and critical thinking skills by providing unprecedented access to new children's books in English and local languages across Asia and the Pacific, especially in remote locations. TAF has enabled the creation of over 10,900 books in 62 languages with over 5.8 million readers over the last 12 months, and the reach continues to grow.

HOW DOES THE ASIA FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTE TO U.S. INTERESTS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION?

The U.S. has important strategic and economic goals in the Indo-Pacific region. TAF's country and regional programs align with these goals and promote stability. In turn, these results have helped deepen economic relationships and increase security cooperation between Asian and Pacific Island countries and the United States. The core areas of TAF's work directly contribute to U.S. strategic goals.

TAF reinforces U.S. policy priorities and interests by improving the business policy environment in Asian countries through better economic governance and fair procurement practices. TAF conducts exchanges and convenes track 1.5 dialogues that focus on identifying opportunities for closer partnership in areas where actors adverse to U.S. interests are increasing pressure, such as defense cooperation, trade and investment, scam centers, and security in the Mekong region. TAF regularly conducts analyses for U.S. allies and partners on the geopolitics of South and Southeast Asia to inform those governments on how best to push back on external pressure and deepen their partnerships with countries in Asia and the Pacific.

Examples include:

—As the most important regional body in Southeast Asia, ASEAN is a critical way for countries in Southeast Asia to strengthen their self-reliance and policy independence. TAF has supported ASEAN in multiple sectors to reinforce its members' collective resilience and help them engage with a wide range of foreign powers, including Australia. TAF has helped to provide inputs to its maritime security efforts, including through the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum. We have also provided training for ASEAN Secretariat staff and officials from across all ASEAN member States on maritime security, Law of the Sea, cyber threats and geoeconomic coercion. TAF supports key U.S. allies and partners, such as the Philippines and Singapore, to advance their agendas on human trafficking and cybersecurity.

—TAF has worked on the issue of illegal mining in Mongolia to curb illegal gold mining and smuggling to China in particular. This has limited the damage and shaped discourse on illegal mining, which is often linked to Chinese capital but also sows mistrust in the multinational mining system to the advantage of Chinese mining interests.

—China has pushed hard to bring more students from Asia and the Pacific to China for education and attract elites to build economic and political relationships. TAF supports youth leaders from across Asia, as well as high-level and

mid-level diplomats to understand, engage, and build relationships with the U.S. and other countries in Asia.

WHAT WOULD THE ASIA FOUNDATION DO WITH THE REQUESTED FUNDING?

FY 2026 funding at $22 million would position The Asia Foundation to maintain and expand programs in countries struggling with internal conflicts, weak governance and institutions, and unpredictable economic conditions. TAF"s programs have deepened over the years to improve governance at the National and sub-national levels, increase educational and leadership opportunities, and expand partnerships with American businesses for skills training in the region. TAF conducts primary research and uses evidence-based approaches to inform our own programs, and research work that also is shared, valued and used by other organizations and donor governments.

In FY 2026, with appropriated funding, TAF will increase its programs in the Pacific, an area of critical U.S. interest, with operations in 11 Pacific countries, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Tuvalu and Nauru. TAF programs make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous by providing an alternative to China's growing influence in the Pacific and strengthening relationships with a key region vital to U.S. and allied interests, ensuring that the Pacific remains stable and governed by transparent, rules-based norms. By investing in the next generation of Pacific leaders and reinforcing shared values, the United States solidifies its leadership in the region, ensuring a free, open, and resilient Indo-Pacific.

The Asia Foundation's work advances U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific and benefits all Americans. By implementing programs across the region that increase security and prosperity, TAF contributes to creating the stable conditions that prevent insecurity spill-over and enable business, educational, and travel opportunities with countries in Asia and the Pacific.

CONCLUSION

Funding at $22 million will allow The Asia Foundation to invest in innovative programs that have received Congressional encouragement. TAF"s track record demonstrates that we can leverage appropriated dollars to secure greater resources and make efficient use of appropriated funds to advance U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region. We appreciate the Committee's longstanding trust in and support for The Asia Foundation. We respectfully urge that the Committee support FY2026 funding for the Asia Foundation at $22 million.

[This statement was submitted by Laurel E. Miller, President.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE BASIC EDUCATION COALITION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the critical role of USAID's basic education programs and their direct impact on U.S. economic growth and global security. This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Basic Education Coalition, a group of 37 humanitarian and development institutions and universities dedicated to ensuring that all the world's children receive a quality basic education.

Education equips young people with essential skills, reduces instability, and creates economic opportunities that benefit both the United States and its allies. Targeted investments in education contribute to stronger diplomatic ties, reduced migration pressures, and a more secure world—reinforcing U.S. leadership in an era of growing geopolitical competition.

This is why education has long been a bipartisan issue in Congress and across administrations. International basic education programs are authorized under the Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act (Public Law 115–56), legislation that was co-authored by the current Secretary of State Marco Rubio and signed into law by President Trump in 2017. A clean reauthorization was co-authored by then-Senator Rubio and signed into law in December 2024 under the National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 118–159). With this bipartisan support, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been a global leader in advancing basic education across the world, with tangible benefits that extend far beyond the classroom.

Prior to the termination of almost every USAID education activity, programs were transforming the lives of children and youth around the world. In FY 2023 alone, USAID programs and partnerships in 55 countries reached 40.1 million learners in pre-primary through tertiary education, including vocational and workforce training. Programs trained more than 762,000 teachers and school administrators with pro-

fessional development activities, improved the safety of 97,100 learning environments, provided 28 million teaching and learning materials, and partnered with 776 higher education institutions to provide capacity development support.

THE IMPACT OF PROGRAM TERMINATIONS

Thousands of Americans in development enterprises are put out of work here at home. https://www.usaidstopwork.com/. It has been confirmed that 19,519 American jobs have been lost due to cuts to foreign assistance (though estimates reach 51,946). 176,818 global jobs have been confirmed lost due to cuts to foreign assistance. Hundreds of faith-based organizations and nonprofits doing this work are forced to close their doors.

The cuts are also having an impact on the US economy. Struggling U.S. farmers lose access to foreign markets. Nearly $30 billion of economic loss is estimated across almost all 50 States. All of these consequences negatively impact the U.S. economy, tarnish America's reputation, lessen our influence abroad, and open the doors for our rivals. To learn more about the impact on the education sector, please watch this video..

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF USAID BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Despite the current challenges, the Basic Education Coalition strongly urges Congress to continue its support of international basic education programs. Programs are critical not only to our partner countries, but to building the trading partners necessary for U.S. economic growth. Societies with an educated and skilled workforce are more stable, prosperous, and democratic, making them stronger trading partners for the United States.

A stronger global economy creates markets for U.S. exports and builds strong trade partners. Eleven out of 15 of America's top trading partners were once recipients of foreign aid. Studies have shown that every additional year of schooling increases an individual's earnings by approximately 10%. In partner countries, education boosts productivity, fosters innovation, and cultivates a skilled workforce capable of driving sustainable economic growth. The impact is especially high for women and girls. Research has shown that every $1 invested in girls' education generates as much as $2.80 in return, equating to billions of dollars in additional GDP growth.

Moreover, USAID's educational initiatives contribute to job creation and opportunities for the private sector. When children receive a quality education, they are better equipped to participate in the labor market, start businesses, and attract foreign investment. This, in turn, creates new markets for American goods and services. Nations with educated workforces are more likely to engage in international trade, including with the United States, fostering mutually beneficial economic relationships.

Additionally, by equipping youth with literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills, USAID helps prevent cycles of poverty. This fosters self-sufficient economies and reduces long-term reliance on U.S. assistance, ultimately saving American taxpayers money.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING GLOBAL AND U.S. SECURITY

The correlation between education and security is well-documented. Countries with higher education levels tend to experience lower levels of conflict, terrorism, and extremism. USAID's basic education programs serve as a strategic tool for promoting peace and stability in fragile regions.

Education reduces the likelihood of child labor, trafficking, recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups, child marriage, and early pregnancy, all of which reduce rates of migration and global instability. By providing access to education, USAID programs disrupt cycles of violence and exploitation, with each year of education reducing a student's risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20%. Conversely, research shows that low levels of access to education and high levels of inequality in education can heighten the risk of violence and conflict. For every $1 the U.S. spends to prevent conflict, it saves an estimated $16 in response costs.

Through education programs, the U.S. can foster democratic values and civic engagement. A well-educated populace is more likely to demand good governance, resist authoritarianism, and contribute to stable, democratic societies. This is crucial for U.S. national security, as it reduces the likelihood of U.S. military involvement in conflict-prone regions and fosters strong allies who share our commitment to democratic governance and human rights.

THE COST OF INACTION

The global education crisis is staggering. Currently, 473 million children live in conflict zones, leading to disrupted education and increased vulnerability. 242 million children have had their education disrupted by natural disasters, an additional 58 million children are out of school, and 70% of children in low- and middle-income countries cannot understand a simple text.

Failing to invest in education would have dire consequences for both global stability and U.S. interests. Without basic education opportunities, millions of children, particularly those in conflict and crisis, will remain vulnerable to extremism, human trafficking, and forced labor. This not only exacerbates humanitarian crises but also poses direct security threats to the United States.

Economic stagnation in partner nations leads to increased migration pressures. When individuals cannot find opportunities in their home countries, they seek them elsewhere, often through dangerous and irregular migration routes. By supporting education, USAID helps address the root causes of forced migration, thereby reducing the strain on U.S. immigration systems.

Finally, U.S. education programs counter the influence of our adversaries who are aggressively expanding their influence through educational initiatives. This includes China's Belt and Road Initiative, which incorporates educational investments in countries, particularly in Africa, training teachers, and recruiting young government leaders from low- and middle-income countries to enroll in higher education programs in China and other countries.

CONCLUSION

USAID's basic education programs are a critical investment in economic prosperity and global security. They create stable economies, strengthen democratic institutions, and mitigate root causes of conflict and extremism. In doing so, they also safeguard U.S. national security and economic interests.

I urge this Committee and the broader Congress to continue robust funding for USAID's education programs. Thank you for your time and consideration to this important matter.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BREAD FOR THE WORLD

Members of the Committee, I am Reverend Eugene Cho, President and CEO of Bread for the World. I want to start by thanking you both, Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Schatz, for your years of support for critical food assistance programs. You both, alongside the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United States Department of Agriculture, have been champions of addressing hunger, and we are so grateful for your bipartisan support for this work. We look forward to continuing to work with you both in strengthening bipartisan support for food assistance.

We are truly living in unprecedented times, with the very underpinning of the United States' response to global hunger in grave jeopardy. Hunger, and our response to it, can completely change lives—I know, because I have seen this in my own life. My father was born in what is now North Korea, in a small village outside of a city called Pyongyang. As one of six children, he faced hunger and poverty. In search of a better life, his family fled south, only to later be forced to endure the horrors of the Korean War. In 1977, my parents made the impossibly difficult decision to come here to the United States—in hopes of providing more opportunities for my two older brothers and me. They left all that was familiar, all that was comfortable, with limited financial resources and only a few words and phrases of English, in search of a better life for our family. Their faith in God and courage changed the trajectory of my life—and I am grateful and proud to be an American. Unfortunately, today, far too many others face the same dire situations my parents experienced all those years ago.

The organization I lead, Bread for the World, is a Christian advocacy organization urging U.S. decision-makers to do all they can to pursue a world without hunger. For five decades, Bread has advocated for government policies and programs that will end hunger in the United States and around the world. On behalf of our 300,000-strong network of advocates, churches, and partners in every congressional district, Bread is committed to empowering and supporting the rights of those affected by poverty, food insecurity, and marginalization around the world.

We have a duty to care for the orphan, the widow, and the foreigner and those experiencing severe hunger and poverty. Right now, people in five countries and territories are living in famine conditions. More than 45 million children are suffering

from severe acute malnutrition, which is immediately endangering their lives. Bread for the World is extremely concerned about the elimination of 86 percent of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) grants and contracts, including programs providing lifesaving emergency nutrition supplements and medicine to tens of millions of people globally. Without the assistance the United States has been providing, millions of people—especially children—will likely die.

As you come together to discern priorities in the fiscal year 2026 appropriations process, we urge you to continue to fund critical hunger, malnutrition, and poverty-focused programs. International aid, a key U.S. soft power, is less than one percent of the U.S. Federal budget, but its impact is outsized in terms of saving lives and improving U.S. national security. Foreign assistance programs support U.S. strategic interests by building and maintaining relationships with partner countries and promoting regional stability. These strategic investments, thus, make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous; for example, 11 of the United States' top 15 trading partners once received U.S. foreign assistance, which helped develop their economies, open new markets for American goods and services, and create stable environments for trade and investments—laying the foundation for long-term economic partnerships and global stability that benefit the United States economically and diplomatically. Furthermore, such investments promote strong health systems that help the United States to detect and prevent infectious diseases from entering our borders. The entire foreign assistance budget should be robust, and we urge you to protect these investments.

Specifically, we at Bread urge Congress to prioritize funding in the following appropriations accounts:

—*$165 million for Nutrition in Global Health Programs at USAID.*—These programs focus on evidence-based interventions affecting children's survival and physical and cognitive development. The modest increases of recent years are simply losing ground to the unconscionable rates of severe malnutrition due to rising food prices, economic downturns, climate shocks, and conflicts. $165 million could prevent stunting for more than 34,000 children, cure more than 185,000 women of anemia, support 110,000 mothers to breastfeed their children, and provide life-saving treatment for 61,000 children experiencing wasting. This account is also essential to effectively implementing the Global Malnutrition Prevention and Treatment Act, enacted in October 2022.

—*$960 million for Feed the Future's Global Food Security Strategy.*—Feed the Future is the U.S. government's key global hunger and food security initiative. Feed the Future has helped more than 23 million people escape poverty and more than five million families live free from hunger. Congress reauthorized the program in 2022, including a moderate increase in authorized funding to $1.2 billion, which has yet to be met in annual appropriations.

—*$1.619 billion for Food for Peace Title II.*—Food for Peace Title II programs provide emergency and long-term development food assistance targeting the most vulnerable populations. In fiscal year 2023, USAID reached more than 45 million people with emergency aid and nutrition assistance in 35 countries. Life-saving emergency assistance is delivered primarily to communities affected by natural disasters, conflict, and chronic food insecurity. Grants provide emergency in-kind food donations from the United States, as well as culturally empowering locally purchased food, food vouchers, and market-based assistance. Development assistance builds on emergency relief efforts to support early recovery and strengthen communities' resilience to shocks, including strengthening nutrition, water and sanitation services, agricultural productivity, and household income diversification.

—*$240 million for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.*—McGovern-Dole provides U.S. agricultural commodities and financial and technical assistance to lower-income countries to establish school feeding programs for preschool and primary school children. In fiscal year 2023, the program fed nutritious school meals to more than 2.5 million food-insecure children during the school year in 34 countries. McGovern-Dole funds the transportation of donated U.S. agricultural products, educational instruction, teacher training, and school infrastructure construction. The program also works to increase access to safe water and improve sanitation, as well as works with local farmers to bolster the sustainable production of nutritious foods. McGovern-Dole projects work toward "graduating" the programs to be fully managed by each country's government, as has happened with the Kenyan Government's Home-Grown School Meals initiative.

—*$24 million for Local and Regional Procurement (LRP).*—The LRP program funds the procurement of culturally empowering local and regional commodities

for projects. It fills in the nutritional and food gaps created by unexpected emergencies and stimulates local markets by supporting livelihoods, increasing farmers' incomes, and creating jobs in the community. LRP runs in conjunction with McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition programs.

—*$4.779 billion for International Disaster Assistance.*—The International Disaster Assistance account provides humanitarian assistance to countries impacted by natural disasters, conflicts, and other crises, including funding for treating acute malnutrition. This funding is key to fighting hunger and malnutrition in our world's many crises this year. On average, USAID responded to 75 crises in more than 70 countries each year.

—*$1.38 billion for the International Development Association (IDA) at the World Bank.*—IDA at the World Bank is the largest single source of assistance for the world's 75 lowest-income countries. In fiscal year 2023, nearly 87 million people were reached with health and nutrition services through IDA. This request includes the first of three installments of the U.S. commitment to IDA–21 (2025–2028). Every dollar in U.S. contributions to IDA leverages $4 in contributions from other donors and internally generated resources.

—*$43 million for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).*—Funds from IFAD help rural people build resilience, improve their food security, and contribute to poverty reduction. IFAD has reached 78.6 million people, half of whom are women. In its current programs, IFAD aims to improve the lives of 100 million rural people. This request is for the second installment of the U.S. commitment to IFAD–13.

—*$10 million for the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP).*—GAFSP is a multilateral platform that provides financial assistance to governments, farmer and producer organizations, and the private sector through grants, concessional loans, and blended finance. It also provides technical assistance and advisory services and has empowered more than 20 million people, including nearly seven million women, to achieve higher agricultural productivity, increased incomes, and improved nutrition security.

—*$197 million for the African Development Fund (AfDF).*—AfDF provides grants and concessional loans to 37 low-income countries on the African continent. AfDF has helped 74 million people improve their agricultural practices in the past 5 years. This request includes $197 million toward the third and final installment of the U.S. commitment to AfDF–16 (2023–2026). Every dollar in U.S. contributions to the AfDF leverages more than $16 in contributions from other donors and internally generated resources.

—*$43.6 million for the Asian Development Fund (AsDF).*—AsDF provides grants to the Asian Development Bank Group's 25 lower-income member countries to promote poverty reduction and quality of life improvements. From 2017–2019, AsDF enabled more than 150,000 farmers to gain access to quality farm inputs. This request includes the first installment toward the U.S. pledge to AsDF–14 (2025–2028).

—*$256 million for Adaptation.*—Climate adaptation programs support countries' responses to adapt and build resilience against the effects of climate change. These funds support bilateral adaptation efforts to build resilience to storm surges in coastal communities, provide early warning systems, improve soil health, and reduce food insecurity through sustainable agriculture. Using these funds, USAID partnered with more than 30 countries to strengthen their resilience to climate shocks.

Thanks in part to this subcommittee and your support of life saving humanitarian and international development programs through the years, the United States has historically led the global response to the needs of the world's most vulnerable people. God's love in Jesus Christ compels us to love our neighbors—in action and expression. Whatever your personal and faith motivations, I hope that you continue to expand this legacy of promoting human flourishing and rights, addressing the needs of the most marginalized, partnering with countries for shared goals of prosperity, and investing in communities around the world. Now, more than ever, the world needs U.S. commitment to poverty reduction and nutrition-focused development.

Thank you for your continued support. May God continue to bless your work.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

The Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE) urges Congress, through the appropriations process, to advance American competitiveness and protect the leader-

ship of American technologies, innovation, and expertise in a rapidly expanding global market.

By funding international clean energy and climate accounts, the U.S. will support American businesses-especially in the fields of energy efficiency, energy storage, natural gas, renewable energy, and electric vehicles—as key players in a global market valued at over $2 trillion in 2024.

The continuation of U.S. international diplomatic engagement and public funding will ensure that U.S. corporate interests are protected and have a voice at the table, and that foreign customers have an American option in the marketplace. While the U.S saw a record-level of investment in the energy transition in 2024 with $338 billion deployed, China led the way with $818 billion invested. The U.S. must increase, not cede market share to China, in global markets.

More broadly, supporting clean energy and energy efficiency deployment and the building of more resilient infrastructure in allied nations enhances U.S. national security and economic interests. These strategic investments reduce climate-induced instability, build trust and create pathways for American companies to expand into fast-growing markets—all while enhancing U.S. influence abroad.

BCSE is steadfast in its support of continued and robust funding for international clean energy and climate accounts, and U.S. contributions to related intergovernmental institutions in the FY2026 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs (SFOPs) Appropriations Bill. These annual contributions help American businesses capture new market opportunities, maintain competitive advantages, and drive innovation, creating economic growth and jobs back home.

We look forward to working with you to enact legislation that recognizes the importance of U.S. international energy and climate finance.

[This statement was submitted by Lisa Jacobson, President.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz: Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the international relief and development agency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), along with the USCCB requests that you protect international poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance in Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) appropriations. We urge you to prioritize the accounts below to at least the levels indicated.

Appropriations Accounts ($ in thousands)	USCCB/CRS FY26 Request
Global Health Programs	
Includes maternal and child health, nutrition, vulnerable children, HIV/AIDS (USAID and State), Global Fund, global health security, malaria, tuberculosis, neglected tropical diseases	10,030,450
Development Assistance	3,931,000
International Disaster Assistance	4,779,000
Complex Crises Fund	55,000
Economic Support Fund	3,890,400
Migration and Refugee Assistance	3,928,000
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	100,000
Millennium Challenge Account	930,000
Contribution to the International Development Association	1,380,256
Green Climate Fund	500,000
U.S. International Development Finance Corporation	998,250

A CATHOLIC VISION FOR U.S. INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The Catholic mandate to serve the common good takes on an increased urgency in 2025 as the Church celebrates a Jubilee year—a Holy year of grace when we are called to bring hope to our global family. This Jubilee year coincides with a realignment of U.S. international assistance to ensure that all programs make the U.S. safer, stronger, and more prosperous. As Congress considers how to accomplish these priorities, we welcome the opportunity to share a Catholic, pro-life vision for U.S. international assistance.

THE STATE'S MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE FOR LIFE AND DIGNITY

In his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est,* Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that charity is an "indispensable expression of [the Church's] very being." The Catholic Church has a moral responsibility to respond to our neighbors in need; additionally, we are called to take an expansive view of our global family. Pope Benedict remarks that "Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbor. The concept of 'neighbor' is now universalized, yet it remains concrete." CRS lives out this teaching by working alongside more than 1,700 local partners to promote the life and dignity of vulnerable families in over 100 countries around the world. But the Church does not do this work in a vacuum. Catholic teaching has long held that governments also have a responsibility to promote human life. In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti,* Pope Francis asserts that States should be "present and active" and "primarily concerned with individuals and the common good." The Church encourages governments to pursue the common good as it applies to all members of our global family, as reflected in Pope Paul VI's writings that "economically advanced nations have a very grave obligation to help developing peoples."

Given the shared responsibility of Church institutions and States to promote human life and dignity, our Catholic vision for U.S. international assistance rests on strong partnerships between the U.S. government and the U.S. Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI affirmed the value of cooperation between state and Church agencies, noting how it has "borne fruit" and increased the effectiveness of humanitarian endeavors. We recognize that U.S. international assistance is not solely charity. It is a strategic investment that has a profound impact on human life, dignity, and global stability. CRS stands ready to build on our history of successful collaboration with the U.S. government and appreciates Congressional efforts to facilitate continued partnership in FY26.

CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Human Dignity and Integral Human Development.—The Church declares that every human life is sacred and possesses inherent dignity, derived not from individual actions but from our creation in the image of God. CRS' work to support the inherent dignity of each person is guided by the concept of Integral Human Development: that true development extends beyond economic or material progress to include spiritual, cultural, and environmental dimensions. A Catholic approach to international assistance, based on the sanctity of all human life, requires a robust commitment to humanitarian response. The Catholic Church and U.S. government have a shared interest in supporting families who face destabilizing conflict, displacement, hunger, and natural disasters. A safer, more peaceful world does not come from defense or diplomacy alone, but by ensuring that people are not forced to act out of desperation. In Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo, CRS provides lifesaving food assistance to keep families from resorting to early child marriage, recruitment by gangs, and forced migration. Going forward, the United States must continue to fund work that promotes peace and protects the inherent human dignity of families in emergencies, whether manmade or natural.

In accordance with the Church's teachings on Integral Human Development, CRS urges the U.S. government to not only fund programs that meet emergency needs but also support families to rise above poverty. U.S. interests and moral interests converge around development programs that help farmers increase yields, communities improve their potable water infrastructure, vendors expand their markets, and children achieve basic education. These programs allow our global family to thrive, create shared prosperity and establish the United States as a valuable partner to do so.

When carried out with intention and consistency, development assistance achieves significant results. This is exemplified by initiatives such as the Shared Future program in Iraq, a 7-year effort to support the sustainable return of religious and ethnic minorities who fled formerly ISIS-controlled areas. CRS and local partners have provided business development support for returnees and worked with communities to ensure that groups of different backgrounds have the tools to rebuild trust. Over time, the project's activities increased residents' intention to stay in their villages from 70% to 92%, ultimately advancing stability. Regrettably, the program was terminated as it sought to solidify these gains in its final year of operation. Congress must continue to invest in development programs that are committed to Integral Human Development because they foster a safer world and a more secure United States.

Solidarity.—The principle of solidarity is rooted in ordo amoris, which teaches that love for God must be followed by love for one's neighbor. The Church emphasizes that solidarity extends beyond personal responsibility to encompass the duties

of States; John Paul XXIII wrote that "[t]he solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery, and poverty of other nations." CRS embodies the principle of solidarity by advancing the global common good and supporting families in poorer nations. Historically, international assistance initiatives have created parallel systems in countries rather than integrating with local structures. True solidarity requires deeper collaboration across civil society, governments, and both the public and private sectors. In Ethiopia, for example, CRS' U.S.-funded poverty-reduction programming aligns with the existing national safety net and public works program. To achieve lasting impact, the U.S. government must fund international assistance programs that are grounded in authentic partnerships with local communities, organizations, private sector and governments.

Subsidiarity.—Human dignity requires that people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. The principle of subsidiarity ensures a balanced relationship between government and civil society, requiring governments to support—not replace—families, communities, and organizations in solving local challenges. The Catholic principle of subsidiarity emphasizes that those closest to a challenge best understand how to address it.

The Church recognizes that aid is most effective when led by local organizations, including Church structures. CRS is a leader in strengthening local capacity, investing in partnerships with faith-based and community-based organizations, particularly in Latin America and West and Central Africa. CRS' concerted efforts to support local Church partners in Latin America have enabled 24 faith-based organizations to access $84 million in U.S. humanitarian funding, enabling life-saving assistance to reach over 284,000 people. Monitoring data from locally-led emergency responses across five countries in Central and South America showed that the percentage of households able to meet their basic food needs increased from 16% to 71%. Unfortunately, some of the awards designed to support these efforts were terminated. The U.S. must fund similar efforts to equip community organizations, especially faith partners, with the tools to drive their own development.

The Importance of Shared Values.—In Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra,* he warns about international aid being used by wealthier nations to impose their values on other countries, at the expense of "time-honored traditions and customs." We ask Congress to ensure that international assistance is used to advance universal values shared by donor and recipient countries, and assert that the pro-life principles underpinning a Catholic vision-inherent human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity-are found across major religious and cultural traditions.

LIVING OUT THESE PRINCIPLES IN OUR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Given the vision for international aid that Catholic teaching provides, CRS urges Congress to:

Reinforce Humanitarian Response Capacities.—We ask Congress for a robust allocation to the International Disaster Assistance account, which provides aid to families in emergencies, stems instability, and protects the dignity of our brothers and sisters living amid conflicts and natural disasters. We also ask Congress to prioritize the Migration and Refugee Assistance account, which supports displaced individuals and helps them return home or settle in safer locations.

Invest in Development Programming and Poverty Reduction.—Development programming, funded through the Development Assistance account and the Economic Support Fund, promotes long-term improvements in food security, water security, literacy, and care for creation. This work is the difference between aid dependence and self-reliance and helps communities avoid needing emergency assistance in the future. We urge Congress to further advance shared prosperity with contributions to the World Bank's International Development Association, which provides financing to low-income countries that are experiencing high debt burdens and cannot invest in growth. The international debt crisis seriously constrains development in many countries.

Build on the Legacy of U.S. Global Health Programs.—The U.S.'s track record on global health issues demonstrates what is possible when we embrace our responsibility as an economically advanced nation in an interconnected world. Funding for the Global Health Programs account supports some of the most successful foreign policy programs in U.S. history, including PEPFAR, as well as efforts to eliminate infectious diseases before they reach our shores. The Catholic Church has principled concerns about certain health activities we find inconsistent with Catholic teaching, including artificial family planning, and have long advocated for maintaining the Helms Amendment. Nevertheless, we support strong funding for morally-appropriate Global Health Programs given the scale at which they advance the dignity

and well-being of our collective family, including Americans. Over time, responses to global health challenges should build resilient health capacity and systems that can respond to all diseases and health conditions.

Fund Mechanisms That Bolster the Private Sector and Strengthen Government Institutions.—In line with the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, international assistance goes further when it is complemented by a thriving private sector and strong government institutions. We ask Congress to robustly fund the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, which promotes private investment in low-income countries, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which incentivizes good governance while partnering with countries to address critical infrastructure needs. Congress must leverage these agencies to create supportive environments for the most vulnerable families who are working to secure dignified lives for their families. These agencies must be better coordinated with other U.S. humanitarian and development assistance.

Ensure Mechanisms to Translate Funds Into Effective Programs.—Congress must see to it that any U.S. agencies managing international assistance have professional expertise and the capacity to deliver timely assistance. The U.S. government should showcase American innovation to ensure that Americans and vulnerable families everywhere enjoy the fruits of peace and prosperity.

We reiterate our thanks for the opportunity to share a Catholic, pro-life vision for U.S. international assistance—one which identifies the state as an indispensable partner to live out American values towards common purpose. CRS looks forward to continued engagement with our government partners, and appreciates Congress' efforts to create a safer, stronger, more prosperous America and a more peaceful, stable world.

[This statement was submitted by Bill O'Keefe, Executive Vice President.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

As an alumnus of both the AFS and CBYX high school exchange programs, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony supporting funding of $741 Million in Fiscal Year 2026 for educational and cultural exchange programs administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

While a junior in high school, I was able to participate in a year long exchange to Belgium with the American Field Service (AFS, 2008–2009). Thereafter, I returned to the United States, graduated from high school, and then spent a year in Germany via the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange program (CBYX, 2010–2011). AFS and CBYX are two of many youth exchange programs supported or administered by the U.S. State Department's ECA that form the foundation of this country's people-to-people diplomatic efforts. Participating in these programs shaped the course of my academic and professional career. Through my subsequent studies and current work in the transatlantic relationship, I have seen firsthand the pivotal role these programs play in the United States's relationship with the rest of the world.

In Belgium, I lived with a wonderful host family of five in the picturesque country village of Thuin, whose population situated along the Sambre river totaled only around 5000 people. In the heart of the town were plaques commemorating how the town had blown up their own bridges in an attempt to halt the advance of Nazi forces during World War II. On a drive with my host grandfather one time, we stopped at a memorial to General Patton and the fallen U.S. troops that fought to liberate Belgium. Living so far from home—but in a place so intimately shaped by the United States—left a deep impression of American strength. However, in the background of my year in Belgium, were the ongoing U.S. military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. The European perspective and frequent criticism of our involvement in the Middle East were instructive as to the limits of American power.

A year later in Germany, I lived with a family of three in Wuppertal, an industrial city in the western part of the country known for its suspension railway called the "Schwebebahn" that glides high above the Wupper river. This railway was heavily bombed during WWII and images of its gargantuan metal skeleton lying collapsed in the river below have become iconic of the destruction that Nazi Germany wrought on Europe. The legacy of the war was everywhere, including at the school I attended, where Germany's role in WWII was taught across multiple subjects—not just in history class, but even in music and biology courses. The chaos they authored in the early 20th century led to a modern Germany determined to atone for their past and serve as a responsible and reliable partner to their global allies. This determination became clear during my year there, when shortly after the 2011 Fukushima earthquake and power plant failure in Japan, Germany doubled down on its pledge to close its nuclear energy sector. Living in a turbulent year of German

economic history in a city marked by WWII sparked my interest and eventually a career in transatlantic politics.

After attending college at the University of California, Santa Barbara, obtaining my master's in German studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, and a year working at the Goethe-Institute (a German cultural organization) in Washington D.C., I was offered a job at the German Embassy Washington. I now work in the embassy's political section and help the embassy leadership and visiting German delegations connect with the American political sphere and understand contemporary political developments. I sincerely believe I would not be at the German Embassy today had it not been for the AFS and CBYX programs.

My years with AFS and CBYX imparted language skills, intercultural competence, regional expertise, and personal growth that serve me every day. The hundreds of thousands of Americans that have participated in these programs can attest to similar advantages gleaned from ECA-facilitated experience abroad:

Language Skills.—Students in these programs live with host families and attend foreign high schools, fully immersed in a foreign-language environment. Participating in AFS and CBYX allowed me to become fluent in French and German. These language abilities qualified me for academic scholarships and opportunities down the line. I was able to quickly complete German and French minors in college by testing directly into advance coursework. After graduating, I was invited to complete a free master's program in German Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder with a year abroad at Universität Regensburg, where I received additional stipends to teach German to undergraduate Americans.

Intercultural Competence.—The ability to communicate with a wider array of humanity is beneficial not only in the job market of a globalized economy, but also here in everyday American life amidst the vastly diverging political perspectives and cultural backgrounds in this country.

Regional Expertise.—Two high-school years in the heart of Europe granted me a sense of how Germans and Belgians feel and think as nations. This visceral understanding of a people is not easily gained from traditional textbook education but creates a tremendous baseline for formal study of a region. After returning from Germany and Belgium, I studied European politics and security and operated at an advanced level of knowledge compared to others without in-country experience.

Personal Growth.—Sending young Americans out into the world is a great exercise in character development, teaching impressionable youth independence, empathy, and critical thinking. Flying to Belgium alone at 16 was both exciting and terrifying. My year there was an irreplaceable experience that forced me to stand on my own two feet and think for myself.

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of alumni whose lives have been directed shaped by these ECA programs, I request that Congress continue to fully fund the office and ensure continued access for generations of Americans to come. The Youth Programs administered by the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau should be directly mandated by Congress to be fully funded, and Congress should require the U.S. Department of State to consult Congress before any changes to these highly effective programs are contemplated.

[This statement was submitted by Kevin Dibb, Senior Political Affairs Specialist.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE ELIZABETH GLASER PEDIATRIC AIDS FOUNDATION

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of the foreign affairs budget, in particular the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the international organizations and partners critical to its success. My name is Doris Macharia, and I am the new President of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF). EGPAF implements a comprehensive response to the global fight to end HIV and AIDS through research, global advocacy, strengthening of local health care systems, and growing the capacity of governments and communities in the world's most affected regions to respond to urgent needs. I am proud to join this mission-driven organization, working closely with families, communities, countries, and donors fighting for an AIDS-free generation. I am asking you today to not only protect funding to end the global HIV and AIDS epidemic, but also to ensure that children are at the forefront of the U.S. global AIDS response.

Elizabeth Glaser started the Pediatric AIDS Foundation over 35 years ago out of a mother's deepest love and unimaginable heartbreak. Fueled by grief after losing

her daughter Ariel to AIDS and determined to save her son Jake and countless others, Elizabeth turned her pain into purpose, rallying the world to fight for research, treatments, and hope for children living with HIV. Thanks to Elizabeth's legacy and countless other mothers and advocates who did not give up, children and families impacted by HIV have a fighting chance.

Thanks to PEPFAR and U.S. leadership targeting mother-to-child transmission of HIV millions of new infections in children have been averted. Globally, new HIV infections among children have declined by 38 percent since 2015 and AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 43 percent.[1] Truly remarkable progress, because bipartisan leaders in Congress across multiple Democrat and Republican presidential administrations worked together to address this global crisis.

EGPAF has been honored to partner with PEPFAR since its inception, collaborating closely with local communities and governments to ensure families receive the vital HIV services they need to survive and thrive. We have been privileged to witness the hope brought to these communities, seeing children born HIV-negative grow into healthy adults, with their mothers at their sides, thanks to the consistent availability of HIV treatment.

I come to you today with deep concern that the success of the PEPFAR program is in serious jeopardy, putting the lives of many pregnant women and children living with HIV at immediate risk. The progress we have celebrated remains incredibly fragile, and there is still much work to be done-nearly half of children living with HIV still lack access to lifesaving treatment.[2] Simply put, without treatment, children with HIV face a devastating reality, with peak mortality occurring around 9 to 12 weeks of age for those born with the virus.[3]

The foreign aid freeze and subsequent terminations created massive uncertainty has raised serious concerns about HIV treatment access for pregnant women, children and their families, and the long-term impacts on the health and well-being of those being supported by the PEPFAR program.

Treatment interruptions are a harsh reality right now, even in best case scenarios. These interruptions do not just cause anxiety, they are also deadly, especially for children. A recent study from PEPFAR showed that in 2024 of those HIV positive children experiencing treatment interruptions one in five died.[4] That study took place when the PEPFAR program looked very different from what it is today. In 30 to 50 percent of the program sites we support in Africa, we have observed service interruptions for viral load monitoring, early infant diagnosis, CD4 testing, and tuberculosis diagnosis—all of which directly impact the quality of screening and testing for HIV services. Today it is incredibly difficult to know how these interruptions stretch beyond our own programs and beyond the countries where we work.

President Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 request for the State Department proposes dramatic and deadly reductions to the PEPFAR program and other global health programs. I urge you to reject that proposal and rather fund these programs at their previously appropriated levels.

The work of the PEPFAR program is popular among your constituents, and it improves U.S. positioning in the world. Recent polling shows that 82 percent of Americans believe that U.S. leadership in global health is important.[5] Additionally, in countries where PEPFAR works, studies have showed that it has contributed to a positive image of the United States.[6]

I want to highlight the critical importance of two key components of the PEPFAR program that have seen dramatic reductions in recent months: HIV prevention and services for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Comprehensive prevention activities are critical if we are going to reduce new infections of HIV, especially for adolescent girls and young women who account for 25 percent of new infections globally each year.[7] Prevention services not only improve the lives of those at risk of HIV infection but also ease the burden on local health systems and, most impor-

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[1] https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media__asset/transforming-vision-into-reality__en.pdf.

[2] https://aidsinfo.unaids.org.

[3] Bourne DE, Thompson M, Brody LL, Cotton M, Draper B, Laubscher R, et al. (2009) "Emergence of a peak in early infant mortality due to HIV/AIDS in South Africa". AIDS.23(1):101–6.

[4] Yang M et al. *Assessing IIT and mortality among CLHIV <15 yo in PEPFAR-supported countries, FY21—FY24.* Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, San Francisco, abstract 121, 2025.

[5] https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/poll-shows-bipartisan-backing-for-continued-u-s-commitment-to-pepfar-sens-frist-daschle-react/.

[6] https://bpcaction.org/the-case-for-strategic-health-diplomacy-a-study-of-pepfar/.

[7] https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media__asset/2024-unaids-global-aids-update-adolescent-girls-young-women__en.pdf?utm__source=chatgpt.com.

tantly, prevention save lives. Promising new prevention innovations are on the horizon and have the potential to significantly accelerate progress against new HIV infections. However, undoing current prevention programs will slow the rollout of these interventions and styme progress in achieving an AIDS free generation in our lifetime.

Programs for OVCs dramatically improve the lives of children living with HIV, and those who have lost a parent or caregiver to the disease. Our projects show that children living with HIV who are also enrolled in OVC programs have improved treatment outcomes and survival rates. This underscores PEPFAR's success that is rooted in its comprehensive approach to HIV. Dismantling this approach risks undoing hard-won progress.

I want to share with you this story from EGPAF Board Member Josephine Nabukenya based in Uganda.

Josephine Nabukenya was born in 1993 in Kampala, Uganda to an HIV-positive mother. Josephine learned about her HIV status in 2001, at the age of 8, when her mother was close to death and had written out a will. HIV treatment was not available, and Josephine's mother considered the two of them to be condemned to death.

Through a special emergency infusion of ARVs at Makereke University, Josephine's mother did survive that bout with death. But they still did not have access to regular treatment, so they both continued to battle illnesses and wait for the opportunistic infection that would eventually kill them.

Then in 2004, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief came to Uganda as the first country in its rollout. Suddenly, there was hope. Josephine and her mother are both alive today thanks to that intervention. In 2005, as a child, Josephine traveled with her mother to the United States to thank Congress for PEPFAR funding. She read a poem she had written asking Congress to continue to fund HIV programs: "Help us, we are dying," she implored.

Through PEPFAR, Josephine and her mother both survived and thrived. Josephine's mother worked for many years as a community health worker, counseling women to get tested and treated for HIV so that they could have an HIV-free baby, an option that was not available to her. Josephine became a spokesperson and peer counselor to other children affected by HIV.

Now an adult, Josephine has founded her own foundation to help children with chronic disease and is studying to get her masters in Public Health. She is alarmed that because of the uncertainty about PEPFAR, Uganda will go back decades. More children will be born with HIV, and more parents and children will die.

"We don't want to go back to the years of what my mother experienced those days when there was no medication," Josephine says. "We don't want to have that kind of story again, because we went past that."

Josephine has seen stock-outs of some HIV medications for children. She has heard from children living with HIV who are terrified that their medications will run out and, as a result, they are hoarding their pills, taking them every other day instead of taking them every day. This can lead to a failure of their treatment as HIV gets stronger in their bodies.

"In this unstable moment, how sure are we that third line and second line regimens are going to be readily available to the clients? We are already facing some stock-outs of some drugs on some regimens and people cannot access that medication."

Josephine reports that the ARV stock is only one aspect of her fears. Key staff have been let go, medical experts who process blood tests, who counsel mothers about preventing mother to child HIV transmission, who follow up with HIV clients. Knowledge is power. And a valuable source of knowledge has been suddenly removed from clinics.

"Staff have been laid off. When you go to some of these health facilities, you will not find the implementing staff workers who are very key in providing HIV education and implementing HIV programs. It's that tension that is currently in the country. How can you treat HIV if you are not aware that you have HIV? How can you avoid passing it to your child if you are not aware that it is in your body?"

Once again, Josephine has a request for Congress:

"Let's find a better way of transitioning that will not affect the clients, will not take us back to the years where our parents lived. I wish we can get a better way of transitioning all this so that clients, so that children, so that pregnant mothers, so that whoever is affected by this condition can get treatment and can live and can have hope."

I want to also express support for our global partners—the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). PEPFAR's success—and in turn EGPAF's success as an

international organization working at national and local levels—is due in large part to the collaboration of countries, communities, related U.S. supported programming, and international partners. The prospect of ending AIDS in children will be jeopardized without a range of actors to provide program support, technical expertise and institutional commitment.

Please think of Josephine and all of the other children, mothers and families supported by PEPFAR when you are making considerations of the program for Fiscal Year 2026. U.S. leadership in the fight against HIV and AIDS must continue.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FAITHS FOR SAFE WATER

INTRODUCTION

Honorable Members of the Senate State and Foreign Operations Committee:

My name is Susan Barnett, and I submit this written statement on behalf of Faiths for Safe Water.

Faiths for Safe Water is dedicated to access to safe water and sanitation for all, and I appreciate this opportunity to convey our support for the continued funding of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programs as a vital component of U.S. foreign assistance.

Water is the only symbol shared by every world religion and perhaps that is no coincidence. Water, and WASH, are the foundation for U.S. and global health and development. WASH drives economic growth. WASH prevents infection and the escalation of antibiotic resistance. WASH fosters self-reliance. WASH offers dignity and safety. WASH saves lives. WASH is the foundation upon which solutions for hunger, health, education, disease reduction, and economic growth are built.

Well-supported WASH programs promote stability and security worldwide, including in the U.S.; they clearly align with U.S. strategic interests; and are crucial in countering efforts to manipulate water resources for geopolitical and adversarial advantage.

WASH has always had a full bipartisan support and has been authorized not once, but twice:

1. The Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act 2005 (Public Law 109–121): This bipartisan legislation prioritized sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation globally. It set measurable targets and increased coordination among U.S. agencies, emphasizing community-led approaches, innovation, and accountability.
2. The Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–289): This bipartisan legislation expanded authorized funding, bolstered partnerships with local governments, established a senior coordinator for WASH, emphasized monitoring, evaluation and sustainability of WASH programs and promotes leveraging with local governments, civil society and the private sector.

CALL FOR CONTINUED FUNDING: FISCAL YEAR 2026

In light of the demonstrated impact and ongoing need, we respectfully urge the Senate to allocate not less than $451,000,000 for sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene projects in Fiscal Year 2026, consistent with Public Law 109–121, as amended by Public Law 113–289. As the Committee recognizes, access to WASH:

—Saves human lives
—Drives self-reliance and economic growth
—Supports global health security through infection prevention and control
—Counteracts adversarial attempts to control water resources and gain geopolitical influence

We are grateful that the Committee annually highlights the importance of supporting the goals outlined in the current U.S. Global Water Strategy and associated annual public reports, which enhance program effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. We strongly endorse coordinated programming that emphasizes sustainability, systems strengthening, and emergency response and request the following bill and report language be included in the FY26 legislation.

REQUESTED BILL AND REPORT LANGUAGE

BILL TEXT:

Water And Sanitation.—Of the funds appropriated by this act, not less than $451,000,000 shall be made available for sustainable water supply and sanitation projects pursuant only to the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005 (Public Law 109–121), as amended by the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–289), of which not less than $225,500,000 shall be for programs in sub-Saharan Africa, and of which not less than $18,000,000 shall be made available to build and maintain safe latrines and non-sewered sanitation.

Report Language:

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).—The Committee recommendation includes not less than $451,000,000 in this act for sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene projects pursuant to Public Law 109–121, as amended by Public Law 113–289. The Committee recognizes the unique role of access to WASH in saving human life, driving self-reliance, enabling economic growth, supporting health security through infection prevention and control, and countering adversarial country efforts to control water resources and to gain economic and security-related advantage and influence. The Committee notes the goals of the current U.S. Global Water Strategy and the role of the related annual public reports in supporting program effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. The Committee encourages coordinated programing for sustainable WASH and systems-strengthening, alongside emergency response. The Committee includes further language under Reports under this heading.

Reports—WASH—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this act, the Secretary of State, as acting USAID Administrator, shall provide a publicly available report and a briefing to the appropriate congressional committees on fiscal year 2025 programs and funds disbursed accordance with Public Laws 116–260 and 117–103 and the US Global Water Strategy. The report shall include disaggregated funding amounts and program reach and impacts for each of the following activity areas: water, sanitation, including disbursements categorized by urban and rural sanitation, and hygiene. Not later than 90 days after the enactment of this act, the Secretary of State, as acting USAID Administrator, is further directed to provide a briefing to the relevant congressional committees on the current implementation of the U.S. Global Water Strategy within current agency structures and plans for how WASH programming will be sustained in accordance with existing statute in fiscal year 2026.

ECONOMIC, SECURITY, AND MORAL RATIONALE

Investment in WASH offers significant economic benefits-each dollar invested can produce substantial returns through healthcare savings, increased productivity, and educational attainment. These programs bolster national security by fostering resilient, stable societies less prone to conflict and extremism. Morally, access to safe water and sanitation embodies our shared values of compassion and human dignity. Supporting these initiatives aligns with our faith-driven commitment to serve the vulnerable and uphold human flourishing.

Given bipartisan support, proven benefits, and moral imperatives, Faiths for Safe Water strongly urges the Senate to fund at least $451 million for Fiscal Year 2026 in WASH programming and to incorporate the proposed bill and report language to ensure accountability and transparency.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to this vital issue.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FHI 360

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of foreign assistance. My name is Tessie San Martin, and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer at FHI 360, a global nonprofit organization that mobilizes research, resources, and partnerships worldwide to address major global challenges. Today we write to ask that you support funding at Fiscal Year 2024 funding levels for the International Affairs (150) Account at $60 billion, including support to Global Health Programs at no less than $10.03 billion in Fiscal Year 2026. This includes

level funding for Congressionally directed priorities for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Global Health Security programming, Maternal and Child Health programming, and the Global Health Programs nutrition subaccount. Additionally, we request level funding for the State Department Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs which supports the United States' international exchange programs. We urge this committee to reject the proposed sweeping cuts to foreign assistance and global health programs included in the President's Budget Request and in the administration's Rescissions package. We also ask that you ensure that the programs are governed by policies that expand access to health care, uphold the progress and gains made to date, focus on sustainability, ensure that lifesaving programming, including prevention services, continue without interruption, and advance U.S. national security priorities by reinforcing strong international partnerships, supporting U.S. global leadership, and strengthening the U.S.'s global reputation.

Global health programs are essential, cost-effective tools that advance U.S. foreign policy objectives, making America stronger, safer, and more prosperous by reducing and preventing disease outbreaks, promoting global stability, and fostering American leadership in research and innovation. Investment in global health is vital for preventing, preparing for, and responding to health emergencies here and overseas. Over decades, our government has wisely invested in mitigating malnutrition, reducing maternal and child mortality, developing new health technologies, training frontline health workers, and strengthening health systems to support our allies and help keep America safe. These bipartisan efforts, along with support for cornerstone programs such as the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) and efforts to end Tuberculosis (TB) have also driven the growth of a world-class health research and manufacturing sector at home.

Continued robust support for these programs strengthens systems so countries can address their health needs while protecting the health of Americans from pathogens that originate outside of our borders. Lack of investment in global health has catastrophic consequences, not only for the affected communities but also for the United States. The impact extends beyond health, threatening economic stability, global security, and geopolitical interests. Make no mistake: U.S. investments in global health are not just acts of goodwill—they are strategic imperatives that safeguard our National security. Strengthening health systems abroad helps prevent the spread of infectious diseases, stabilizes fragile regions, and reinforces America's role as a global leader.

There is no clearer example of the impacts of global health programs than the significant achievements of the PEPFAR program. PEPFAR, which is currently funded at $4.395 billion annually, exemplifies smart foreign assistance, and FHI 360 has been a proud implementing partner of the PEPFAR program since its inception. Over the last two decades, FHI 360 has provided technical support to more than 50 countries. In the last 5 years alone, our programs have reached over 7 million people with critical HIV services, identified 420,000 new HIV cases and linked them to treatment, and supported the transition to direct USAID funding of more than 30 local organizations. One of the USG's flagship programs, implemented by FHI 360 in partnership with other U.S. non-profits and hundreds of local organizations, is the Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) project. The program is dedicated to achieving and maintaining HIV epidemic control and leverages its infrastructure and partnerships to address other priority public health challenges, including global health security (GHS), COVID–19, and mpox. We have witnessed the undeniable impact of the program and have seen firsthand how it transforms lives.

Over the last 6 months, we have also witnessed immense disruption in our PEPFAR programming. The EpiC project—one of the largest remaining PEPFAR awards—showed HIV testing, new treatment initiations, and PrEP initiations decreased by about 70% from Oct–December 2024 to January to March 2025. EpiC's prevention services have been severely curtailed. Beyond dramatic decreases in prevention, testing, and new people starting treatment, we are concerned that we haven't yet seen the worst impacts. Clients typically receive several months of antiretroviral treatments at a time, which has helped provide a buffer against disruptions. But these months of medication will soon start to run out. Once a person living with HIV loses access to lifesaving treatment, their immune system will stop functioning normally, leaving them at risk of other infections and death. Research shows that viral rebound will occur in as little time as two weeks following treatment interruption. If PEPFAR services—including prevention—don't resume in a consistent, reliable manner, deaths from advanced HIV disease will increase, and new infections will rise.

The clear benefits to our National security justify a request for no less than $900 million for Global Health Security programs. These programs are vital for strengthening global capacity to detect and control infectious diseases in both animals and humans, preventing the spread of dangerous pathogens to the United States. U.S. investments equip partner countries with the infrastructure and expertise needed to detect, prevent, and rapidly respond to infectious disease outbreaks before they escalate into deadly and costly pandemics. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, in response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak, global health security investments improved diagnostic platforms for laboratory testing, enabling high-quality, internationally standardized diagnoses within hours and rapid lab deployment within 48 hours to track outbreaks. Global health security programs also foster stability and goodwill, as improved health outcomes in vulnerable regions create stronger, more resilient societies.

In today's interconnected world, a disease can spread globally in as little as 36 hours; failing to contain outbreaks at their source endangers American health, economic stability, and national security, while also undermining broader global health security. FHI 360's Global Health Security programs detect and track diseases at both national and local levels. This includes facilitating access to reliable lab services for U.S. partners and allies to address serious public health threats. These programs also build long-term systems that can quickly identify potential health risks. By helping countries collect, analyze, and report health data effectively, the United States enables faster and better decision-making to prevent and respond to disease outbreaks. FHI 360 provides in-country services and care for communities. The loss of U.S. support for global health security programs could result in more than 28,000 new cases of infectious diseases such as Marburg and Ebola every year, as well as result in major economic and social costs.

We are also concerned by the proposed cuts to global maternal and child health and global nutrition programs, currently funded at $915 million and $165 million. The Maternal and Child Health account supports delivery of cost-effective, proven, life-saving services in countries where the burden of preventable deaths is the highest. Malnutrition continues to be the greatest threat to child survival worldwide, killing millions of children every year and leaving hundreds of millions more kids with permanent physical and cognitive disabilities. In a matter of decades, we have seen rates of child death and stunting—a severe form of malnutrition—cut in half because of strong investments in proven, cost-effective interventions. The proposed cuts threaten these gains and the positive knock-on effects they have on Americans. Not only are well-nourished children more likely to survive, but they are also less susceptible to catching and spreading infectious diseases, 33% more likely to escape poverty as adults, and less susceptible to recruitment from extremist organizations. At the societal level, these outcomes protect Americans from diseases, build global stability, and open new markets for American goods and services.

In addition to our work in global health, FHI 360 is a proud implementing partner of U.S. Department of State Exchange Programs. Initiatives such as the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), sports and English language exchanges, and scholarship programs help advance U.S. national security priorities by fostering people to people ties and building long-term relationships between Americans and international leaders in government, business, academia, and other fields. These programs also deliver direct benefits to communities across the United States, with a significant portion of its funding spent in American communities and U.S. based businesses. The Administration's budget request includes a staggering 93% cut to these and other cultural exchange programs, which would severely undermine the reach and efficacy of this critical foreign policy tool. We urge the committee to retain FY 2024 funding levels for these initiatives, which are vital to advance U.S. interests and values around the world.

While we understand the need for the Administration to align foreign assistance programs with its priorities, the terminations and severe reductions in foreign assistance funding, along with inconsistent payments for lifesaving programs, have curtailed the impact of critical humanitarian and health initiatives and reduced U.S. leadership in the global arena. These are not mere bureaucratic hurdles; they have real-world and life-threatening consequences for the communities we serve, for the very health systems and services that U.S. assistance over the last 30 years has helped to build, as well as our organization and our staff in the US and globally. Continued robust investment along with a return to a reliable and rapid partner payment system are critical and immediate priorities to ensure lifesaving essential services can operate efficiently and effectively.

We recognize the interconnected nature of long-term development programs and their role in improving global health and humanitarian outcomes. Coordinated efforts, particularly those focused on food security, nutrition, and water, sanitation,

and hygiene, work alongside global health initiatives to strengthen communities and enhance well-being in partner countries. We support a strong topline funding level for National Security, the Department of State, and related programs to ensure these critical efforts are fully funded.

I'd like to end with a quote from Birhan, a mother living with HIV in Ethiopia who had been receiving HIV services, social support, and small-business loans through one of USAID's programs implemented by FHI 360:

> *"I help [my children] live a good life," Birhan says. "I have self-confidence. I work, and I send my children to school . . . I want to create a better chance for the future."*

Account	FY24 Funding Level
International Affairs (150) Account	$60 billion
State Department Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs	741 million
Global Health Programs	10.03 billion
PEPFAR	4.395 billion
Global Health Security	900 million
Maternal and Child Health	915 million
Nutrition	165 million

We create a better future for ourselves by helping mothers like Birhan live free of HIV infection and continue to work to build a better future for her children and her community. Despite receiving a lifesaving waiver, this program was terminated in February, leaving countless mothers like Birhan without support. We urge Congress to reaffirm the importance of these vital, lifesaving, and strategic programs by fully funding the International Affairs account and critical global health initiatives at Fiscal Year 2024 levels.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FIRST FOCUS ON CHILDREN, CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Senator Schatz:

I am writing from First Focus on Children's Campaign for Children. We are a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to prioritizing children in Federal budget and policy decisions.

I am writing to draw your attention to a program that we are very concerned is being forgotten in budget and policy decisions: the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief's Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program.

While it seems that most of PEPFAR will be retained at least in some capacity at the State Department, that is not going to be the case for OVC programs. Further, OVC programs are included in the $9 billion rescissions package now being put forward to Congress for approval.

As you know, HIV is an insidious disease, particularly when it comes to children and babies. Its impacts extend well beyond the biomedical, often leaving society's youngest without parents, without education, and even without food. When parents or caregivers become debilitated or die, children are at grave risk of falling into poverty, suffering abuse, and contracting HIV and dying themselves.

The Trump Administration's dismantling of USAID and freezing of much of U.S. foreign assistance has placed the lives of millions of children, who previously were safe, in great jeopardy—and even led to the deaths of some.

In the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, a bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers were educated to understand the tragic impacts it would have on children. They knew from practitioners that treating HIV alone wasn't enough; the epidemic's socio-economic consequences, especially on children, had to be addressed, too. That is why they very intentionally built protections into the AIDS, TB and Malaria authorization bill that created PEPFAR in 2003 to direct 10% of all HIV funding to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). These resources supported community-based programming—ensuring children were able to attend school, eat nutritious food, travel to clinics for testing and treatment, and receive psychosocial support to address the stigma and discrimination they experienced. These programs also trained OVC caregivers in positive parenting and provided livelihood support, enabling them to expand microbusinesses and better provide for their children.

PEPFAR's OVC programs also played a key role in identifying HIV positive children, getting them tested, and ensuring adherence to treatment regimens. These functions are still urgently needed. Children continue to be left behind in the global HIV response: just over half of all children living with HIV (57%) are on life-saving treatment versus roughly 77% of adults. And while children make up only 3% of people living with HIV, they account for 12% of AIDS-related deaths.

The OVC set aside was a remarkable achievement, representing the first time that the holistic needs of children were addressed in one program. But the set aside also did much more, which was not anticipated at the time: it provided an antidote to child labor and sex trafficking—evils that perennially thrive in conditions of marginalization and poverty. OVC programs succeeded by strengthening the family and caregivers around the child. PEPFAR prevented 8.2 million children from becoming orphaned in the first place and its parenting programs have been shown to reduce physical, verbal and sexual abuse of children by up to 57%. PEPFAR's OVC work on behalf of adolescent girls reduced their experiences of sexual violence by 65% in Malawi and 68% in Kenya. According to new modeling of high-prevalence countries using Population-Based HIV Impact Assessment (PHIA) surveys, over the past decade alone, OVC programs prevented the sex trafficking of 8,500 children, reduced the number of child marriages by close to 7,000 and cut the cases of physical and emotional violence against children by nearly 55,000. PEPFAR did all this by keeping girls in school, training parents, educating young boys and girls about what to watch out for and changing social norms around what is and is not acceptable. These types of activities are time- and labor-intensive, but they change behavior of communities over the long term and are critical in ensuring UNAIDS' 95–95–95 goals. They also produce a strong return on investment.

Over the past two decades, PEPFAR has supported over 13 million orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers with holistic interventions addressing the social and economic devastation of AIDS. It has also protected 10.3 million girls from sexual abuse. When children remain in school, especially girls, they can generate income, support their families, and contribute to the economy as adults. PEPFAR's OVC programs have produced a $4 return on economic productivity gains for every $1 spent on programming.

But sadly, OVC programs are all gone as of January of this year and the set aside authorization expired in March of this year. The programs supported by the OVC set aside did not receive the waiver from Secretary of State Marco Rubio for "lifesaving humanitarian assistance" as other medical components of PEPFAR did. As a result, programs were abruptly cut off and 6.6 million orphans, vulnerable children and caregivers were completely abandoned.

Right now, in countries that were receiving PEPFAR's OVC support, children are not getting food or being connected to medical care and some have not survived as a result. Because education is not free in many countries, when a family is not able pay school fees (something the OVC set aside did), children are often forced to work, many times on the street. In some places, when conditions are dire, it is not uncommon for children to be trafficked—"sold" into domestic servitude or married off as young children, where they are without protection from physical and sexual abuse.

But we know how to prevent this. PEPFAR has saved and protected millions of babies and young children, ensuring they have the safeguards and support they need to thrive.

And there is not a moment to lose. Experts estimate that 10% of children in sub-Saharan Africa are orphaned from all causes, and this loss of a parent is associated with education loss, child abuse, and child sexual exploitation, with consequent elevated risks of HIV infection. The dangers for children are acute: 20% of girls experience rape or sexual assault and a child younger than 15 years is estimated to die from AIDS every 7 minutes.

Given all of the above, we respectfully request that you include binding language in your FY26 State Foreign Operations Appropriations bill directing the administration to retain OVC programs at the State Department and directing the administration to obligate and disburse 10% of PEPFAR resources to socio-economic programs supporting Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Without the 10% set aside for OVC within PEPFAR that former Senator Lugar, Senator Biden and former Representatives Henry Hyde, Tom Lantos and Barbara Lee created two decades ago, millions of children are and will continue to be at great peril. Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Leila Nimatallah, Vice President, Advocacy & Mobilization.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of robust funding for accounts that help prevent mass atrocities and violent conflict, support urgent humanitarian needs, and strengthen resilience globally at the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the Fiscal Year 2026 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill.

Congress has a critical role to play as an independent branch of government entrusted by the Constitution with the power of the purse, and we urge you to uphold your role and your responsibility to the American people and the long-standing bipartisan support for funding an effective U.S. leadership role in the world. I urge Congress to reject reckless cuts to U.S. foreign assistance and the dismantling of vital agencies and expertise that the administration has undertaken without legal grounding or congressional approval. More specifically, I urge you to continue investing in critical funding programs that address the urgent crises facing our country and world today. The full list of Friends Committee on National Legislation's (FCNL) FY26 SFOPs priorities has been included in the chart at the end of my testimony.

Founded in 1943 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), FCNL is a national, nonpartisan Quaker organization that advocates for policies informed by our faith, morality, and belief that there is that of God in every person and that all creation has worth and dignity.[1] More than 80 years ago, guided by the Religious Society of Friends' historic Peace Testimony[2] and the voices of Quaker meetings across the country, FCNL began advocating against conscription and for aid to civilians in Europe in the midst of World War II. Today, we are still advocating for a world free of war and the threat of war and for assistance to all those in need. I offer this testimony today in the belief that this pursuit of peace is a mutual priority of FCNL and the 119th Congress.

Violence, climate shocks, and forced displacement are some of the most significant challenges faced by the world today. The United States cannot address them through spending decisions that dismantle tested and successful foreign assistance. Foreign assistance should be improved, and FCNL has long advocated for reforms to foreign assistance, including by ensuring it is locally led. FCNL, and partners around the world, stand ready to work with you to improve the way foreign assistance is designed and delivered, but these reckless cuts are not the answer.

In my testimony today, I will urge you to invest deeply in the tools needed to prevent, mitigate, and respond to these crises. These tools are cost-effective, proven approaches that Congress has supported and invested in a bipartisan manner for many years. They make us stronger, safer, and more prosperous. They are also the morally right thing to do.

As you know, over the past 6 months, President Trump and his administration have conducted unparalleled attacks on foreign assistance—eroding the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and terminating over 85% of foreign assistance programs without Congressional approval.[3] Now, Secretary of State Marco Rubio is requesting Congressional consent for the rescission of over $8 billion in currently available funds to make legal the ongoing impoundment of these funds and dramatically reorganize and reduce future foreign assistance funding. This rescission package is unnecessary as your committee already reviews rescissions in the annual appropriations process—making it a costly distraction from the mandated congressional appropriations process. The Senate must act to protect United States investment in foreign assistance.

I strongly urge you, the committee and Senate to uphold the moral obligation and national interest of the United States to help the most vulnerable around the world. The Trump administration's actions have already caused enormous harm and cost thousands of lives. In just 6 months, the purposeful discontinuation of global health programs have caused over 115,00 adult deaths and 245,000 child deaths.[4] Over 30 million children will lose access to education, slowing efforts to eradicate poverty and reducing positive pathways for young people around the world to avoid violent

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[1] "Unity of creation." *Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain* https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/25/.

[2] "Our Peace Testimony." *Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain.* https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/24/.

[3] Miolene, Elissa. "Nearly 10,000 Awards Cut from USAID, State Department." *Devex,* 26 Feb. 2025, www.devex.com/news/nearly-10-000-awards-cut-from-usaid-state-department-109517.

[4] Nichols, Dr. Brooke, and Eric Moakley. "Impact Dashboard—Impact Counter." Impact Counter, www.impactcounter.com/dashboard?view=table&sort=title&order=asc. Accessed 27 June 2025.

and criminal transnational groups.[5] Over 70 million people across 60 countries[6] will face increased hunger without food assistance previously provided by farmers in the U.S., with millions of mothers and children facing severe malnutrition and wasting who had been receiving nutrition assistance.[7] Funding for countries like Chad assisting 760,000 Sudanese refugees has dried up[8] and Colombia, the largest recipient of U.S. funding in Latin America, has been left alone to stem the tide of devasting migration across the Americas, hosting 2.8 million Venezuelans fleeing economic and political upheaval.[9]

The consequences of U.S. abandonment of foreign aid will escalate humanitarian crises, embolden authoritarian regimes, and drive more, not less, forced migration to America's borders. Peacebuilders and human rights defenders who risk their own security and safety to seek a more just and peaceful future for their communities now face the future without U.S. funding or diplomatic support.[10] Other countries, including many of our European allies, are following the U.S. lead and cutting humanitarian and development assistance while increasing military spending. This will exacerbate crises and make the world less safe.

Beyond the immediate human impacts, accepting the dramatic cuts in the president's budget request would undermine key diplomatic partnerships and reduce U.S. capacity to counter corruption, reduce instability and prevent violent conflict. For example, investing in peacebuilding and conflict prevention not only eases human suffering caused by war and violence but also supports long-term stability, mitigating future needs for high-cost, reactive emergency humanitarian spending and the potential for U.S. involvement in foreign wars.

The cost effectiveness of peacebuilding and conflict prevention is exceptional—every dollar invested in preventing violent conflict saves $26–$103 on the cost of conflict according to the International Monetary Fund.[11] Additionally, as the rate and scale of climate-related disasters increases—from extreme weather events to rising sea levels—U.S. investment in climate resilience is essential to prevent instability and humanitarian crises. Research shows that every dollar invested in climate resilience and disaster preparedness saves three dollars in future humanitarian assistance.[12]

Failing to invest in peacebuilding, violence prevention, and resilience is too costly a choice, in dollars and in lives. When the United States waits until the seeds of violence bear fruit, its available tools are fewer, more expensive, and less effective. The United States is left with triaging expensive but often preventable humanitarian crises while too frequently deploying securitized approaches that aim to enforce order rather than ensure justice and can exacerbate instability in the long run.

These efforts are more crucial than ever. Globally, we have seen that contemporary violent conflicts inflict disproportionate harm on civilians through the deployment of indiscriminate weapons such as banned cluster munitions, the use of starvation as a weapon of war, conflict-related sexual violence, and systematic targeted attacks against ethnic, racial, and religious groups. The United States can and must do more to prevent, mitigate, and respond to violent conflict and promote sustainable peace.

Cuts to foreign assistance undermine some of the United States' most cost-effective tools for promoting peace and human security globally. The cuts also risk irrep-

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[5] "Dismantling USAID: Consequences for Americans and Global Development." Institute for Development Impact, 2025. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/679bdd21823c9474a907e5b3/t/67ae46437ae13a57cf46a6e7/1739474504806/Dismantling+USAID+-+Consequences+for+Americans+%2B+Global+Development.pdf.

[6] "Food Assistance: Feed the Future." *U.S. Agency for International Development,* Internet Archive, 17 May 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20250201032407/https://www.usaid.gov/food-assistance. Accessed 27 June 2025.

[7] "Fighting Child Malnutrition during and after Humanitarian Emergencies." *USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance,* Medium, 28 May 2021, https://usaidsaveslives.medium.com/fighting-child-malnutrition-during-and-after-humanitarian-emergencies-a325bf72d1f6. Accessed 27 June 2025.

[8] "The Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts." *Better World Campaign,* https://betterworldcampaign.org/impact-of-foreign-assistance-cuts. Accessed June 27, 2025.

[9] Noriega, Christina. "Trump's Aid Freeze is Undermining His Immigration Policy." *Foreign Policy,* https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/05/14/us-aid-cuts-colombia-venezuela-migrants-trump-immigration/. May 14, 2025.

[10] Miolene, Elissa. "'God Bless America' and the Death of 10,000 Projects." *Devex,* 28 Feb. 2025, www.devex.com/news/god-bless-america-and-the-death-of-10-000-projects-109529.

[11] Mueller, Hannes, Christopher Rauh, Benjamin R Seimon, and Raphael A Espinoza. "The Urgency of Conflict Prevention—A Macroeconomic Perspective". *IMF Working Papers 2024.256* (2024), https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/001/2024/256/article-A001-en.xml.

[12] InterAction "Adaptation" *Choose to Invest FY2025* https://www.interaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Adaptation-FY2025.pdf.

arably damaging the United States' credibility with other governments as a steadfast partner. Defunding programs in partner countries creates a soft-power void which other actors will readily fill. Just two weeks after the State Department suspended global demining programs, including grants to the Cambodian Mine Action Center,[13] China announced major new grants to Cambodia to cover the gap. This weakens American diplomatic leadership in the region and deteriorates the U.S.' ability to promote democratic norms.

Moreover, the disruption to economic development programs will slow or decrease the global effort to end extreme poverty and the opening of new markets for U.S. trade. Foreign assistance from the United States helps low-income countries to mature into robust economies that support their populations and in turn become valuable trading partners to the U.S., strengthening our economy. A rising tide lifts all boats. As former Representative Ted Yoho testified to the House Foreign Affairs Committee in February, "sustained economic growth is the only lasting solution to eradicate extreme poverty, and it puts our partners on a path to move from aid to trade. Investments in health, education, and agriculture enable partner countries to chart a path towards increased prosperity."[14]

By supporting sustainable peace and resilience in conflict-affected and fragile States, foreign assistance also enables would-be refuge seekers to remain in their home communities. When President Obama froze development assistance to Yemen in 2015, there was a dramatic spike in violence against civilians before the decision was reversed in 2017 under the first Trump Administration.[15] This violence drove Yemenis to flee their country; today more than 4.5 million Yemenis are displaced.[16] This is a stark example of how both peacebuilding and development assistance are critical to preventing forced migration, which affects the number of newcomers to the United States, one of the most significant challenges faced by the country today. There are more than 36.4 million refugees globally,[17] a number that will only grow as conflict worldwide continues to rapidly escalate in parallel with the costs of providing emergency life-saving humanitarian aid.

Lastly, I would like to remind you and the members of the Committee, the Constitution is clear: Congress guides, not obeys, the executive branch on matters of Federal spending. This Committee has a responsibility to uphold its Constitutional independence and its obligations to the American people. I urge this Committee to act to protect U.S foreign assistance funding, global leadership and its legacy of generosity.

Account Name	FY24 Enacted	FY26 Request
Atrocities Prevention	$6,000,000	$25,000,000
Atrocities Prevention Training, State Department	500,000	500,000
Complex Crises Fund	55,000,000	75,000,000
Reconciliation Programs	25,000,000	50,000,000
International Disaster Assistance	4,779,000,000	4,779,000,000
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance	100,000	100,000
Migration and Refugee Assistance	3,928,000,000	3,928,000,000
Renewable Energy	247,000,000	260,000,000
Sustainable Landscapes	175,700,000	185,000,000
Adaptation	256,500,000	270,000,000
UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees	.....	344,000,000
Middle East Partnership for Peace Programs	50,000,000	100,000,000

[13] "Beijing Announces $4.4 Million in Funding for Landmine Clearance in Cambodia." *Radio Free Asia,* Radio Free Asia, 21 Feb. 2025, www.rfa.org/english/cambodia/2025/02/10/cambodia-china-mine-clearance-grant/.

[14] The Honorable Ted Yoho "Remarks for the Record." February 13, 2025, https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20250213/117889/HHRG-119-FA00-Wstate-YohoT-20250213-U1.pdf.

[15] Knudsen-Latta, Ursala. "90–Day Freeze on U.S. Foreign Assistance Endangers Millions." *Friends Committee On National Legislation,* 3 Feb. 2025, www.fcnl.org/updates/2025-02/90-day-freeze-us-foreign-assistance-endangers-millions.

[16] "Yemen Humanitarian Crisis." *USA for UNHCR,* www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/yemen/. Accessed 27 June 2025.

[17] "Remarks for the Record." 2025, p. https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20250213/117889/HHRG-119-FA00-Wstate-YohoT-20250213-U1.pdf.

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz and Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

[This statement was submitted by Bridget Moix, General Secretary.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FRIENDS OF THE GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, distinguished members of the subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about one of the United States' most efficient and effective investments in foreign assistance: the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Friends of the Global Fight is requesting $2 billion in funding for the program in fiscal year 2026, the first appropriations year of the Global Fund's 8th Replenishment.

I want to start by thanking the Chairman and the Ranking Member for your leadership on the Global Fund. Senator Graham, your robust allocations to the program have sent a clear message to other donors about sustained American commitment, spurred them to step up and match us, and had the direct impact of saving many lives. Senator Schatz, your tireless support has been invaluable for keeping America in the fight against these epidemics.

With the considerable changes taking place in international assistance today, the subcommittee's bill will play a critical role in shaping the future of US global health and health security leadership. I would argue that the Global Fund should play a foundational role in this future as a driver of burden sharing, transition to country leadership, pandemic preparedness and lifesaving results.

Established in 2002, the Global Fund is an international partnership that leverages contributions from governments and the private sector to provide lifesaving treatment and prevention for HIV, TB and malaria with the goal of bringing these epidemics to an end. Since 2002, the Global Fund partnership has reduced the combined death rate of these three diseases by 63% and saved more than 65 million lives. In 2023 alone, the Global Fund supported 25 million people on life-saving antiretroviral therapy for HIV, treated 7.1 million people for TB and distributed 227 million mosquito nets to protect families from malaria.

The Global Fund is America's way of making sure other countries contribute their fair share to the fight against AIDS, TB and malaria. Every $1 contributed by the U.S. has been matched by $2 from other donors. For more than 20 years, that highly successful financing structure had been defined by a provision in U.S. law. This is a proven, concrete mechanism that has driven tremendous burden sharing, leveraging $49.5 billion from other countries and private sector corporations who have joined us in fighting these deadly pandemics that threaten Americans at home and abroad. We urge that the 2:1 match rate be maintained as it provides maximum leverage to U.S. investments, leads to greater investment by other donors, and positions the U.S. at the leading supporter of the Global Fund with the influence that brings.

The Global Fund also accelerates the path to country independence from aid: partner countries are required to demonstrate increasing commitment to financing health as a condition of Global Fund assistance.

The Global Fund is highly efficient, keeping operating expenses at just 6.2%, with multilayered oversight and accountability mechanisms to make sure every dollar goes as far as possible. In fact, the Global Fund has no staff on the ground, implementing through qualified partners like health ministries and local caregivers, including faith based humanitarian organizations. This local implementation model also lays the groundwork for transitioning financial responsibility to recipient countries.

The U.S. has a central role in determining Global Fund policy with a permanent seat on its board—with influence far beyond that because of its ability to leverage other donor contributions as well as PEPFAR's global leadership and expertise. The U.S. also provides crucial technical assistance, contributes to program design at the country level and coordinates implementation on the ground.

Perhaps the best way the Global Fund ensures good stewardship of taxpayer dollars is by adopting the ethos of the private sector, emphasizing value-for-money, return-on-investment and the power of innovation. The private sector plays a vital role in the Global Fund. In fact, private sector partners have a dedicated voting seat on the Global Fund Board. The Global Fund works with manufacturers to secure better prices on the health commodities it procures. For example, the Global Fund recently negotiated a 25% price reduction for the preferred first-line HIV treatment

by pooling orders, negotiating price ceilings and enabling generic manufacturing. American companies are major suppliers of the Global Fund, which has invested $3.5 billion in the U.S. economy since 2010, serving Americans' prosperity. This is an organization that embraces the market and recognizes its potential to solve global problems.

Investment in the Global Fund protects Americans—a Lancet study found that more than a third of the Global Fund's investments contribute to pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. Disease outbreaks continue to pose an enormous and urgent threat to the United States. TB cases have recently surged in places like Kansas and local malaria transmissions have been detected in Florida, Texas, Maryland and New York this year alone. In addition, biological threats continue to proliferate globally, including recent outbreaks of Mpox, Marburg virus disease, Ebola and H5N1 avian influenza. The Global Fund is one of the world's biggest investors in building the health surveillance and laboratory systems abroad that form the first line of defense against biological threats to America.

Health assistance is a potent expression of American power and leadership, allowing us to cultivate goodwill and influence in countries where we face acute competition from our strategic rivals. While China offers opaque infrastructure loans and Russia provides security assistance to despots, the U.S. leverages its distinct medical and innovation advantages as tools of global influence. With clear and measurable results, health assistance—including through the Global Fund—is the U.S.'s most visible, enduring and effective form of diplomacy in many low-income countries.

The Global Fund is also uniquely positioned to save lives in the world's most challenging environments. Because of its model of local implementation, the Global Fund supports lifesaving programs in conflict zones where even American personnel cannot operate safely. It runs mobile clinics on the front lines of Ukraine, which has some of the highest burdens of HIV and TB outside of Africa. It is fighting malaria outbreaks in camps for Sudan's internally displaced peoples, screening for TB on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and treating survivors of sexual violence for HIV in Haiti. Where health systems are on the brink of collapse, it is the Global Fund which holds them together.

The Global Fund represents the best of foreign assistance: results driven, cost efficient, market oriented, locally implemented and with independent oversight. It makes America safer, more secure and more prosperous—and it saves lives.

This year, the donor countries will make pledges towards the Global Fund's 3-year replenishment cycle-and as always, they will look to the United States as an example. A $2 billion support level in FY26 would be consistent with the U.S. historically providing one-third of Global Fund resources. That investment would save an estimated 2.5 million lives and avert 44 million cases of HIV, TB and malaria.

These are not forever investments. We are on track to win this fight and transition partner countries to eventually finance their own responses. For Americans and the world, this is an investment that with a lifechanging rate of return.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Schatz, thank you for your lifesaving support for the Global Fund.

[This statement was submitted by Chris Collins, President and CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FULBRIGHT ASSOCIATION

As the Board of Directors of the Fulbright Association, we appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of $288 million in funding for FY 2026 for the Fulbright Program, administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

The Fulbright Association is a U.S.-based non-profit membership organization that was established in 1977 to provide Fulbright alumni with a forum to continue to advance the program. It is the oldest national Fulbright alumni organization in the world, with a central office in Washington, D.C. and 54 chapters in 38 States. It also cultivates relationships with institutions and organizations involved in the administration and advancement of the Fulbright Program abroad, including binational Fulbright commissions or other national Fulbright alumni organizations.

The President's FY 2026 request for ECA's funding proposes a 93% cut to the Bureau's budget and eliminates funding for the Fulbright Program entirely. We would like to respectfully press the subcommittee to reject that request and instead fully fund the Fulbright Program at its FY 2025 level of $288 million. The requested appropriation will allow the Department of State to maintain its world-renowned, flagship academic exchange program. Approximately two-thirds of the program's annual 8,000 awards are jointly managed and co-funded by 49 countries with Fulbright

commissions and approximately one-third are unilaterally managed by U.S. embassies in more than 110 additional countries.

The Fulbright Association works closely with the Alliance for International Exchange and concurs fully with its analysis of how academic exchanges make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Therefore, we will not take the subcommittee's time to reiterate those arguments here but wish to note that among the distinguished 400,000 plus alumni of the program, Fulbrighters account for more than 40 current and former heads of state, 62 Nobel Laureates, and 89 Pulitzer Prize winners.

We also wish to emphasize the unique organizational structure of the Fulbright Program based on executive agreements with other countries and to illustrate why it is the most cost-effective program that the State Department has in its repertoire of exchange programs.

—The Fulbright Program is one of the oldest, most effective, and universally admired public diplomacy tools of the United States. The longest-standing friends and the most important allies and trade partners of the United States—large and small—have Fulbright commissions. The program's global reputation is venerable; 38 of the 49 countries with active Fulbright commissions today date back to the foundational years of the program between 1947 and 1961. Fifteen countries have celebrated their 75th anniversary of Fulbright exchanges with the United States in the past few years.

—Between the passage of the Fulbright Act in 1946 and the passage of the Fulbright-Hays Act in 1961, the Fulbright Program initially was limited to some 40 countries that concluded unique executive agreements with countries interested in participating in the program. These agreements enabled the establishment of Fulbright commissions governed by binational boards with an equal number of U.S. and foreign board members, and they institutionalized the practice of joint policy and decision-making.

—The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 then expanded the scope of the program by allowing U.S. embassies abroad to sponsor grantees in countries without Fulbright commissions, and it invited foreign governments and actors from the private sector (especially in countries with Fulbright commissions) to contribute financially to bilateral exchanges to the best of their abilities, thus institutionalizing cost-sharing that has provided the foundation for the program's stability and growth.

—As a result, foreign public and private contributions to the program increased from zero in 1961 to over $100 million annually in 2010, and it more than quadrupled from $26 million in 1993 to $107.4 million in 2010. Today, over 35 countries contribute more to the program annually—in some cases in multiples—than the United States. According to official reports, the 13-year average foreign private and public contributions for the Fulbright Program from FY 2010–22 is $102.3 million, and a considerable amount of this funding benefits U.S. grantees.

—A recent example of the impact of foreign funding on the Fulbright Program is the dynamic growth of the U.S. English Language Teaching Assistant Program (ETA) to over 1,200 grants worldwide since 9/11. This growth in opportunities for U.S. citizens is based on the fact that host countries cover the substantial on-site costs for U.S. ETAs in the form of grants and/or salaries.

—The Fulbright Program also has a long tradition of soliciting support for its incoming international grantees from American colleges and universities, foundations, and civil society. The 13-year average of the cumulative contributions from the U.S. private sector for the program from FY 2010–22 is $47.6 million.

—Therefore, the total average foreign public and private contributions of $102.3 million and U.S. private contributions of $47.6 million to the program for the past 13 years has been $149.9 million, with the average annual U.S. government allocation for the program for the same time period being $248.8 million.

—In other words, every U.S. dollar invested in the Fulbright Program leverages an additional 60 cents in funding.

—The institutionalization of joint decision-making and joint funding make the Fulbright Program a unique tool in countries with Fulbright commissions characterized by a strong sense of co-ownership. Between 1948 and 2019—the last year for which cumulative numbers are available—countries with Fulbright commissions accounted for almost 80% of the program's 403,700 participants: (In 100+ other countries without Fulbright agreements or commissions, Fulbright grants are managed and funded unilaterally by U.S. diplomatic missions, which make the programs substantially smaller and considerably more expensive to operate for the U.S. government.)

Thank you again for the opportunity to express our support for funding of $288 million in Fiscal Year 2026 for the Fulbright Program. It is extremely important that this subcommittee push back forcefully against the President's inadequate budget request for ECA in FY 2026 and instead continue bipartisan support for the program at current funding levels. We look forward to working with the subcommittee to ensure that the Fulbright Program continues to play a vital role in making the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Thank you for your consideration.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GAVI, THE VACCINE ALLIANCE

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and Members of the subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the subcommittee on behalf of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi). Since its inception, Gavi has protected over 1.1 billion children in lower-income countries with safe and effective immunisations, saving more than 18.8 million lives. With support from the United States, Gavi expanded global access to COVID–19 vaccines and delivered more than 2 billion doses to the world's lowest-income countries, including hundreds of millions of U.S.-donated doses, averting 2.7 million deaths. Thanks to a generous fiscal year 2025 appropriation from the United States Congress, Gavi can meet the first year of the historic U.S. pledge of at least $1.58 billion over 5 years. For FY26, Gavi is requesting a $340 million appropriation—no change from the FY2025 request.

A commitment by the United States to provide $340 million to Gavi in fiscal year 2026 will help achieve the goals in our ambitious 2026–2030 strategy, including reaching an additional 500 million children by 2030 and potentially save between 8 to 9 million lives. Furthermore, Gavi aims to immunize the next billion children in half the time. A key priority for our strategy is the continued rollout of the world's first-ever malaria vaccines, with a goal of vaccinating over 50 million children against the disease during this period. Lastly, the support will help prevent backsliding and accelerate progress in routine immunization, promote stability in vaccine markets, and drive innovation in global health.

I would like to thank you, Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and the other members of the subcommittee for your strong public support of Gavi, and for providing funding to Gavi at $300 million in fiscal year 2025. This Committee has been and continues to be an essential part of our success in bringing vaccines to the world's most vulnerable and in helping to keep America and the world safe from infectious diseases. Your steadfast support has helped inspire low-income countries to begin financing their own routine immunization programs, with all countries that benefit from Gavi support paying a share of the cost, depending on income level. Currently, 19 countries have fully graduated from Gavi support, with more countries expected to graduate in the coming years.

A CRITICAL TIME FOR GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY

Vaccines remain one of the most cost-effective public health interventions available. With support from the United States and other donors, Gavi not only strengthens routine immunisation systems but also builds stockpiles of vaccines against potential disease threats like dengue, Ebola, measles/meningococcal, cholera, and yellow fever. In Gavi's next strategic period, Gavi is ready to prevent upcoming expected 150 outbreaks with swift call for actions on vaccines across stakeholders as well as deployment of Day Zero Financing (a financial instrument to provide rapid financing in the case of new outbreaks) when needed. Furthermore, continued support from the U.S. will allow Gavi to expand access to its portfolio of vaccines to as many as 20 diseases and invest in critical emergency stockpiles.

Disease outbreaks and increasing fragility and displacement jeopardize national routine immunization programs and threaten global health security. Increasing birth rates in Gavi-supported countries also mean that a greater number of children must be immunized each year just to maintain the same coverage rates overall. Despite these challenges, Gavi has set ambitious goals to reach even more children and, with continued support and partnership, is well-placed to reach these goals and make further progress on closing the immunization gap.

GAVI'S CONTRIBUTION TO U.S. INTERESTS

Gavi's work not only benefits global health but also directly supports U.S. interests by making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous:

—*Keeping America Safe.*—Gavi fills a critical gap in global health security and pandemic response. By providing cost-effective access to vaccines and facili-

tating the delivery of donated doses globally, Gavi helps prevent global outbreaks from reaching Americans and American soil. This proactive approach to global health security is crucial in protecting the U.S. from infectious disease threats.

—*Making America Stronger.*—The U.S. seat on Gavi's board provides a powerful platform to voice U.S. priorities, such as advancing global health initiatives against malaria, polio, and other diseases. This leadership role allows the U.S. to shape global health policy and ensure that its priorities are reflected in Gavi's strategic goals.

—*Advancing America's Prosperity.*—Gavi is one of the world's leading purchasers of U.S.-produced vaccines and vaccine delivery supplies, such as drones. Gavi directly contributes to U.S. job creation by deploying technology manufactured in numerous States to deliver vaccines in the hardest-to reach geographies. Furthermore, by averting outbreaks from spreading to the U.S., Gavi indirectly supports economic stability and growth for Americans by preventing expensive public health crises.

THE ALLIANCE'S 2026–2030 STRATEGY AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Strong U.S. support for Gavi in FY26 is critical to help achieve the ambitious goals outlined in the 2026–2030 strategy. Gavi programs have been a major factor in reducing the number of deaths due to vaccine-preventable diseases by as much as 70% since 2000. Specifically, continued funding will have a clear programmatic impact and additional return on investment, directly supporting Gavi's ability to implement new tools to save lives, including:

—Accelerate availability of malaria vaccines, enabling Gavi to buy millions of doses of the new malaria vaccines, which have shown the potential to reduce all child mortality by an impressive 13%. Over the next strategic period, Gavi aims to vaccinate at least 50 million children against malaria.

—Expand investments to prevent Human Papillomavirus (HPV), aiming to immunize over 120 million girls and young women with the vaccine between 2026 and 2030, which will avert more than 1.5 million deaths from cervical cancer.

—Continued support from the U.S. will allow Gavi to expand access to its portfolio of vaccines to as many as 20 diseases and invest in critical emergency stockpiles.

THE GAVI MODEL—COUNTRY CO-FINANCING AND GRADUATION

Empowering countries to take ownership of their vaccination programs is a core component of the Gavi model. Every country that receives Gavi support shares the responsibility of vaccinating their children, by co-financing the vaccine costs. Over the next 5 years, Gavi countries will fund a record percentage of the costs of their vaccines, contributing over $4 billion, or more than 40% of the costs. This is compared to 10% just 15 years ago, reflective of the Gavi's unique model.

As a country's income grows, their co-financing obligation also grows until they reach a specific Gross National Income cap, at which point they begin to transition out of financial support from Gavi. Throughout this process, Gavi provides technical support and guidance to ensure transitioning countries have the capacity to continue implementing sustainable and equitable vaccine programs. So far, 19 countries have graduated from Gavi support, with at least one former Gavi country now becoming a donor in the next strategic period. Two former Gavi countries, India and Indonesia, are now donors to Gavi's 6.0 replenishment.

Gavi's impact draws on the strength of its public and private sector partners. Building healthy markets is critical to the long-term success of the Gavi mission. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi, its partners, and the private sector have been working to improve vaccine market certainty by pooling demand from Gavi-eligible countries. In fact, Gavi's purchases vaccines for more than half of the annual global birth cohort. This market-shaping power allows Gavi to leverage pooled procurement and achieve preferential pricing with manufacturers, delivering a stronger return on investment for everyone involved. These market-shaping strategies have also helped attract new manufacturers across the world to support Gavi-eligible countries, from five vaccine manufacturing firms in 2001 to 19 firms today, thereby creating a healthier global vaccine market. Partnerships with the private sector are also integral to Gavi's model, leveraging their financial resources, operational expertise, and fostering innovations that help the Alliance to deliver on its ambitious coverage and equity goals.

CONCLUSION

Continued U.S. investment in global health programs is essential to protect people from rising health threats and reducing preventable deaths. These programs complement the impact of Gavi-supported immunization efforts and are crucial to maintaining health security in the United States and around the world.

A U.S. contribution of $340 million to Gavi for fiscal year 2026 is critical to maintain Gavi's gains. Continued funding for Gavi will help expand immunization efforts, support country transitions to self-financing vaccine programs, promote program sustainability, and strengthen global health security.

We thank this subcommittee for its long history of protecting global health and other foreign assistance programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Chlö Cooney, Director, US Strategy.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS AND PARTNERSHIPS, SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and members of the committee:

I thank you for the opportunity to highlight the vital contribution of American diplomacy and foreign assistance and how it might be used effectively. My name is Mike Jobbins, Vice President of Global Affairs and Partnerships at Search for Common Ground (Search). Search for Common Ground is a leading international peacebuilding and conflict resolution non-profit, with approximately 60 offices in 34 countries. Search receives donations from individuals in all 50 States, as well as grants, cooperative agreements and contracts from governments, multilateral agencies and foundations, including the State Department and USAID.

I have served with Search for Common Ground for 16 years in Africa and here in the U.S. My testimony is informed by my experience at Search and other organizations, and by the experiences of my colleagues and partners around the world, but the views I express are my own.

Peace and conflict resolution is the issue of our time. Over the past 5 years, the number and intensity of armed conflicts have doubled. Wars in the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of Congo have intensified. Chronic instability and threats from armed groups in the Sahel, Haiti, Yemen, Nigeria, the Horn of Africa, Mozambique and the Central African Republic persist. These conflicts—and the failure to end them—have a terrible human and financial cost. More than 233,000 people were killed last year,[1] and many more died from hunger and illness caused by humanitarian crises resulting from war. Millions were forced to flee their homes, joining the more than 120 million forcibly displaced worldwide.[2]

Abandoning action in conflict zones is a "penny wise and a pound foolish." The logical consequence of retreating from assistance on the ground in conflict zones is more refugees fleeing war, more people needing emergency aid, and a more dangerous world for our children and grandchildren. In his inaugural address, President Trump promised the American people that he "will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end. And, perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into."[3] This is an admirable goal for any President. It also requires strong bipartisan support, commitment, and oversight from Congress. Peace takes time, and must last across parties and across Administrations.

At Search for Common Ground we have seen firsthand how U.S. foreign assistance can support breakthroughs in peace, trust, and prosperity—the result of sustained bipartisan commitment, and strong Congressional leadership:

—In Nigeria in 2021, a Search program—supported by the State Department's Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) Bureau—helped support defections of Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa members, by disseminating messages encouraging people to leave extremist groups (75 percent of surveyed defectors had seen these messages).[4]

—In the border region between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan where violence has frequently broken out, Search worked with U.S. funding to build relationships, support dialogue, and facilitate negotiations with political leaders, all of which

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[1] ACLED. *2025 Conflict Watchlist.* 2025.
[2] UNHCR. *2024 Mid-Year Trends Report.* 2024.
[3] President Donald J. Trump, "The Inaugural Address," January 20, 2025.
[4] Search for Common Ground, "Final Evaluation: Jandeniyo! Let's Talk About It," April 2021.

led to a historic agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on March 13, 2025 which ended the border dispute.

—With support from the State Department's Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (GWI), in 2023 Search supported election monitoring and protection work by a group of indigenous women in Guatemala, who ensured that other indigenous women were able to safely exercise their right to vote in the election.

Congress should build on longstanding bipartisan efforts, including major legislation like the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, the Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act, Global Fragility Act, and robustly supporting people-to-people reconciliation. In the overall U.S. government budget, these are small investments. But they reap significant benefits and deserve bipartisan support.

As you consider appropriations for FY26, we recommend considering four key capabilities for U.S. foreign assistance to save lives overseas and save taxpayer money in the long term: (1) Respond Faster; (2) End Chronic Crises; (3) Ensure Foreign Aid is "Conflict Smart"; and (4) Deliver Effectively. The President has proposed streamlining many of these capabilities in the America First Opportunity Fund, in order to be more agile and responsive, and to match foreign assistance to diplomatic efforts. Whether Congress adopts that proposal or retains the current structure, the budget should reflect these key capabilities for work in conflict zones and ensure funds are used to meet long-term strategic interests, guard against capricious policy shifts, and meet legislative requirements.

I. RESPOND FASTER AND BETTER IN CRISES

The U.S. should be able to move quickly to support action in fast-changing situations. Diplomatic tools and appropriations accounts should be set up to seize windows of opportunity to prevent and de-escalate conflicts before they become expensive chronic emergencies. These opportunities are the "stitch in time that saves nine." A quick and modest intervention saves money and lives, particularly when coupled with diplomatic efforts.

Tools like the *Complex Crises Fund* (CCF), which at $60 million amounted to just 0.097% of the total SFOPs budget in FY23, have outsized impacts. In 2014–15, Search's CCF-supported program in the Central African Republic was able to prevent rapidly escalating violence and revenge killings in several cities. The CAR government noted in its own independent evaluation that without this quick work to dissuade people from committing violence, the situation would have been much worse. Rapid support to *Atrocities Prevention* helps respond to emerging risks of mass killings and violence against civilians in conflict zones. In Mali in 2017 and 2018, in response to a 20-year high in violent attacks, Search worked with Atrocities Prevention funds in partnership with the State's Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) to provide people with nonviolent alternatives and to address mistrust that fueled fighting; 98% of people reported that violence and atrocities were reduced in their communities because of this work.[5] In FY26, these accounts should be robustly funded to facilitate these rapid response capacities.

Rapid response requires U.S. officials to have local knowledge and access to understand what is needed to address the situation. This means being present on the ground in Embassies, or at the very least engaging regularly with local communities and organizations like Search who work on the frontlines of conflicts.

II. END CHRONIC CRISES AND CYCLES OF VIOLENCE

Wars are dragging on longer than ever. Conflicts in the Middle East endure for decades, places like Yemen and Myanmar see cycles of violence every few years, and the recent escalation of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has its roots in the 1990s. These cycles take a horrifying human and financial toll. The burden of breaking these cycles of violence are first and foremost on these societies. U.S. funding and diplomacy should support these efforts.

Funds like the People-to-People Reconciliation Programs and the Middle East Partnership for Peace have strong bipartisan support and an evidence base in building the relationships for long-term peace. Search's prevention-focused efforts supported by DRL and funded by Reconciliation Programs—which made up only 0.036% of the total SFOPs budget in FY23—reduced violence between farming and herding communities in Nigeria between 2019 and 2021, and provided people the skills to

[5] Search for Common Ground, "Final Evaluation: Anw Ko Hêrê (Peace Now!)," September 2021.

resolve conflicts nonviolently and prevent future violence. Funds authorized by the Global Fragility Act address the long-term drivers of conflict in several priority countries. Given the number and intensity of conflicts the world faces, these accounts should be funded to at least FY25 levels for FY26.

Resolving long-running conflicts requires sufficient resources and capacities. Mediation, dialogue, and negotiations are complicated processes, and require skills from across the Government. Beyond the White House and State Department (particularly CSO), the Department of Defense, the Intelligence Community, the Treasury, and trade-related agencies like Commerce and the Development Finance Corporation all have capabilities that should be used in support of peacemaking efforts.

III. ALL AID SHOULD BE CONFLICT–SMART

The inability to manage conflict is the primary driver of poverty and suffering. People in Sudan are not hungry because of crop failures, but because of ongoing conflict; people in Yemen are not poor because they cannot find jobs, but because decades of war decimated the economy. Therefore the priority for addressing food insecurity, poverty, disease, and education deficits should be resolving conflicts that drive these issues.

Humanitarian, development and other programs should be "conflict smart." U.S. assistance should not exacerbate or create new grievances or violence. Aid provided in conflict zones should also be designed in ways that break the cycle of dependence and contribute to peace. Efforts to support America's global priorities, including rights, can contribute to building healthy, safe, and just societies more able to resist war or see future conflict. Tools like the Human Rights and Democracy Fund help address conflict drivers like injustice and human rights violations, setting the stage for healthy, safe, and just societies. In Sri Lanka, Search, in partnership with DRL, worked to address mistrust and divisions between the country's Tamil and Singha communities resulting from the civil war, and helped people grapple with the history of violence in order to move forward together.

Conflict issues should also be included in the diplomatic agenda of the U.S., both in specific peace processes as well as in American priorities like economic security, religious freedom, protection of women and children, and respect for human rights. Multistakeholder efforts like the Voluntary Principles promote responsible mineral and energy investments in conflict zones, and efforts to support International Religious Freedom build more just and safe societies, reducing levels of displacement due to oppression or marginalization. Evidence shows that peace processes that formally and informally involve civilians, especially women and youth, produce more sustainable and effective results.[6]

To succeed in their mission, U.S. leaders should have access to the best technical expertise, and prioritize key areas common across peace processes like: ceasefire verification, humanitarian access negotiations, strategic communications, accountability & transitional justice, stabilization & security sector reform, disarmament & demobilization, and post-conflict reconstruction issues.

IV. DELIVER, MEASURE AND ACCOUNT, BUILDING ON "WHAT WORKS"

In order to carry out the priorities of rapidly responding to changing contexts, ending chronic crises, and integrating conflict into all areas, the U.S. needs to maximize its tools and resources for effectiveness and accountability, and communicate to both the U.S. and foreign public.

Investments should be accountable to American taxpayers. Foreign assistance recipients should publish evaluations and audits, and report regularly to the Administration and Congress. Evaluations should be informed by an Impact framework[7]—a simple set of key measurements that track success across individual programs and agencies. Foreign assistance should also make sense to the people being helped. Assistance should be transparent about the resources committed, how they will be used, and should use a Grounded Accountability[8] mechanism to make sure that the money being spent is delivering things that local people actually want.

The State Department should prioritize grants over cooperative agreements or contracts. This allows for more diverse partnerships and burden-sharing. Grants require less paperwork for both the U.S. Government and non-profit partners. A larg-

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[6] UN Women, 2015: "A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325."

[7] Search for Common Ground, "Measuring our impact".

[8] Urwin, E., Botoeva, A., Arias, R., Vargas, O., & Firchow, P. 2023. *Flipping the power dynamics in measurement and evaluation: international aid and the potential for a Grounded Accountability Model. Negotiation Journal.*

er number of relatively smaller grants enables higher risk-tolerance. Funding should directly focus on supporting groups that are on the ground working, rather than "parachuting in" management schemes. This will require the State Department to have sufficient technical expertise in grants management and monitoring and evaluation, and strong and effective financial oversight of grants and implementation, particularly within Embassies, including the ability to closely monitor programs for responsible use of taxpayer funds, and reasonable adjustments/adaptations in response to conflict contexts.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION-US

On behalf of the Global Campaign for Education-US (GCE–US), thank you for the opportunity to present our views on the importance of investing in international basic education programs in the FY26 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill. Specifically, we urge the subcommittee to recognize the important role that investments in global education play in the strength, security and prosperity of the U.S. and to support $970 million for the Nita M. Lowey Basic Education Fund, including at least $150 million in funding for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and $30.4 million in funding for Education Cannot Wait (ECW).

We want to extend our sincere thanks to Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and members of the subcommittee for past efforts to protect funding for international basic education programs. We want to also thank Senator Van Hollen for spearheading the May 22, 2025 Dear Colleague letter in support of FY26 funding for international basic education which garnered 30 signatures.

Bipartisan Congressional support for international basic education is critical in ensuring that the U.S. remains a global leader for generations to come. The number of out-of-school children reached 251 million in 2024, and three out of four children in developing countries cannot read by the age of 10.[1] Yet the power of education is clear. Starting in the early years, education lays the groundwork for lifelong learning and well-being. This is particularly evident when schools address the needs of the whole child and young people receive nurturing care in a school setting that includes health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, and protection from violence.

The Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development Act (READ Act), reauthorized by Congress this past December, makes access to basic education a priority in U.S. foreign assistance efforts. Since its initial passage in 2017, the READ Act has resulted in improved coordination across the U.S. government to ensure that resources allocated for international basic education are well spent, with significant and meaningful accountability and transparency measures. The current U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education 2024–2029 is an important tool in this effort and notes that the U.S. vision is to "achieve a world where education systems in partner countries enable all individuals to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society."[2]

GCE–US is at the forefront of ensuring that this vision is carried forward as we represent a diverse coalition of over 40 organizations dedicated to ensuring quality, universal education for all children and youth. Given the vast experience across our membership, we can confidently say that investments in international basic education programs serve the National interests of the United States, making us safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

EDUCATION MAKES THE U.S. SAFER

In areas where educational opportunities are not available and children may live in poverty or lack parental involvement in their lives, they are more vulnerable to becoming involved with criminal groups or even terrorist organizations.[3] By being in school, children are better protected against these risks and can develop positive approaches to addressing societal challenges.

Doubling the percentage of youth who have achieved secondary education cuts the risk of conflict in half, and countering violence remains critical to our National secu-

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[1] UNESCO (2024). Global education monitoring report, 2024/5, Leadership in education: lead for learning.

[2] U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education 2024–2029 (2024).

[3] Center for Strategic and International Studies (2023). Investing in Quality Education for Economic Development, Peace, and Stability.

rity. Secondary education also reduces the likelihood of young people supporting political violence by 48 percent,[4] which inherently leads to global stability.

Access to education reduces the likelihood of child labor, trafficking, recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups, child marriage, and early pregnancy, all of which reduce rates of migration and global instability. The harm that violent groups could cause to countries like the United States is also diminished. The link between ensuring that young people around the world have access to a quality education and U.S. national security interests is clear.

EDUCATION MAKES THE U.S. STRONGER

Life-saving education initiatives serve vulnerable populations around the world and help build the next generation of American partners and allies. Favorability toward the U.S. is significantly higher among those exposed to American education, media, and exchange programs. If young people and their parents see that the U.S. is supporting their teachers and schools and creating workforce development programs to grow their economies, they will undoubtably appreciate and align with U.S. interests in the future. Longitudinal studies show that education fosters democracy.[5]

U.S. education programs counter the influence of our adversaries, like China and Russia who are aggressively expanding their influence through educational initiatives. This includes China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has programs in at least 147 countries around the world and incorporates educational investments in countries that they serve. But support from the BRI has strings attached, forcing loans and other agreements to which China owns the terms. Requiring access to rare minerals and other natural resources and setting countries up to be beholden to China for decades to come.

Historically, young government leaders from low- and middle-income countries attended U.S. universities for their higher education. This fostered a natural alliance with U.S. interests, building lifelong connections and a commitment to U.S. values. Increasingly, the next generation of leaders from growing economies are choosing to enroll in higher education programs outside of the U.S., particularly in China.

EDUCATION MAKES THE U.S. MORE PROSPEROUS

Access to an education allows individuals to receive the skills and knowledge necessary to gain employment and earn a living for themselves and their families. Researchers estimate that without a minimal investment in the early years of a child, communities will lose the longer-term benefits that can equal 8–19 times that investment.[6] This has a ripple effect across societies, helping to drive long-term economic growth and foster innovation.

In addition, 11 out of the top 15 U.S. trade partners were former recipients of foreign assistance.[7] The overall return on investment for basic education programs is approximately 10 percent and for every extra year of schooling, hourly earnings increase by 9 percent later in life.[8]

MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS

U.S. bilateral assistance is complemented by U.S. engagement in multilateral partnerships like Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education. Each plays a critical role in helping the most marginalized build a future for themselves and the communities in which they live.

Launched in 2016 with the support of the U.S. Government and civil society organizations including GCE–US, Education Cannot Wait is the first global movement and fund dedicated to education in emergencies. ECW gathers international humanitarian aid actors, along with public and private donors, to help reposition education as a priority on the humanitarian agenda.

The U.S. Government has played a critical role in ECW's transformative efforts, contributing over $170 million in financial assistance since its inception, including $25 million in annual appropriations in FY20, FY21, and FY22; $30 million in FY23; and $30.4 million in FY24 and FY25. The U.S. also provides technical support to ECW and its partners and plays a leadership role in ECW's governance structure.

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[4] Relief Web (August 14, 2018). Can education really reduce armed group recruitment?

[5] Science Director (April 2018). Education and democracy: New evidence from 161 countries.

[6] The Lancet (November 23, 2024). The cost of not investing in the next 1000 days: implications for policy and practice.

[7] U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (April 4, 2016). Here's Why Foreign Assistance is Important.

[8] The World Bank. Education Overview.

To date, ECW has raised $2.8 billion from 28 donors, including the private sector[9] and has reached over 11.4 million children and youth and trained over 188,000 teachers in 48 crisis-affected countries.[10] ECW-supported programs span a wide spectrum of context-specific activities including water and sanitation infrastructure, school feeding, mental health and psychosocial support, learning tools and materials, school infrastructure, and teacher training and incentives.

The Global Partnership for Education is the largest global fund solely dedicated to transforming education in lower-income countries. GPE works to deliver quality education so that every girl and boy can have hope, opportunity and agency. As a public-private partnership focused on ensuring a more effective and efficient response to the global education challenge, GPE supports 90 lower-income partner countries to develop their own pathways to transform their education systems.

The United States is a long-standing partner of GPE, having joined the partnership in 2009. To date, the U.S. has contributed $931 million to the GPE fund, making it the 5th largest donor. In 2021, the United States made a 3-year pledge of $350 million for GPE's 4th Replenishment, covering the period 2021–2025.[11] The U.S. has been a key partner in GPE's success as GPE programs have reached 253 million children in partner countries since 2022.[12]

With GPE support, partner countries are building stronger education systems that give children a quality education, putting them on the path to reach their full potential. GPE improves education systems to create lasting change at scale. By looking at the big picture beyond individual schools, teachers or students, GPE leverages the profound transformations required to deliver quality education for every child.

CONCLUSION

Education has been a smart investment for the U.S. and should remain a priority. Education is crucial to bettering livelihoods and improving economic stability in developing countries and in the United States. U.S. policies and programs should recognize the interconnected needs of children and youth everywhere and that access to an education is a critical part of addressing the needs of the whole child.

We thank Congress for its past support for these transformative programs. In accordance with the READ Act and its reauthorization, we urge the subcommittee to include $970 million for the Nita M. Lowey Basic Education Fund, including at least $150 million in funding for the Global Partnership for Education and $30.4 million in funding for Education Cannot Wait in the FY26 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Giulia McPherson, Executive Director.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GLOBAL HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES COALITION

On behalf of the Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC), a group of 50 nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and aligned businesses advancing policies to accelerate the creation of new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other tools that bring healthy lives within reach for all people, I am providing testimony on fiscal year 2026 (FY26) appropriations for global health programs traditionally funded through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). These recommendations reflect the need expressed by our members working in the United States and around the globe to develop new and improved technologies for the world's most pressing health issues and ensure national and global health security. We appreciate the Committee's historic bipartisan support for global health, particularly for continued research and development (R&D) to advance new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other tools for long-standing and emerging health challenges. We also encourage the Committee to sustain the funding for global health accounts at USAID and at the Department of State.

Stronger global health R&D positions the United States to be better prepared for the next pandemic, saves lives, and builds research capacity both at home and abroad. Public funding for global health research is a strategic investment that strengthens our economy, supports U.S. leadership in innovation, and keeps Ameri-

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[9] Education Cannot Wait (2024). Contributions by Donor.
[10] Education Cannot Wait (2025). Main Results Dashboard.
[11] Global Partnership for Education. The United States and GPE.
[12] Global Partnership for Education Impact.

cans safe. We cannot afford to fall behind in this area as other nations, including China, increase their investments in global health innovation.

I am testifying today because we still do not have the technologies that we need to achieve a future where pandemics are prevented and health is within reach for everyone. In 2022, 1.3 million people were killed by tuberculosis (TB), 1.3 million people were newly diagnosed with HIV, and 249 million people were infected by malaria. In 2021, at least 1.14 million people were killed by antibacterial resistance. Today, more than 1 billion people worldwide are still affected by neglected tropical diseases. As we look toward the future, we cannot afford to wait for the emergence of pandemic threats with the potential to match or exceed the disruption of COVID–19 to pursue the discovery and development of new tools to protect us. Recent cuts to lifesaving programs threaten to reverse progress. Without sustained investment and congressional leadership, these numbers will only grow-with significant global health security consequences, both globally and here at home.

To develop the innovations and technologies that we need to defeat these diseases and to prevent future pandemics, the U.S. government needs to sustainably increase-not reduce-its investments in global health research programs. Public funding is critical for this sector because, despite their lifesaving uses, commercial incentives to invest in R&D are lacking-either because the affected populations have limited purchasing power or, in the case of emerging threats, no viable market yet exists.

Furthermore, the return on investment for the United States is substantial. Data from the past 16 years show that investments in global health R&D led to economic gains in the United States and in partner countries. As told in a recent analysis conducted by a partnership between Impact Global Health and GHTC, between 2007 and 2022, $46 billion in U.S. government investment in global health R&D led to $104 billion in economic activity and the creation of more than 600,000 jobs countrywide. In addition, follow-on effects from U.S.-backed innovations are projected to generate $255 billion for the U.S. economy.

Over the past several months, the critical R&D work conducted through USAID funding has hit a standstill. Many of our members have had their programs terminated, putting progress toward tackling some of the world's most pressing challenges on an indefinite hold. GHTC urges Congress to assert its funding and oversight authority over programs that keep Americans safe, save lives, and maintain international stability—a key facet of our National security. We, as members of the broader global health advocacy community, respectfully request that Congress maintain the fiscal year 2024 funding for global health programs at USAID and the State Department, with inclusions of previously agreed upon increases to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Regardless of how the reorganization of USAID programs is conducted, we request that Congress appropriate $4.025 billion to global health programs that were being run by USAID in the FY26 appropriations bill. This includes continued support for preventing, preparing for, and responding to health emergencies; mitigating the effects of neglected tropical diseases; reducing maternal and child mortality; developing and distributing new health technologies and vaccines—including through contributions to Gavi and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and many other programs; and supporting cornerstone initiatives like the President's Malaria Initiative and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Similarly, we request $6.395 billion for the global health programs at the State Department, which accounts for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Global Fund, and the United States' contribution to UNAIDS.

Beyond our broad asks, GHTC strongly urges Congress to view the recent USAID contract terminations as a cautionary signal that lifesaving programs—particularly those focused on global health R&D-are being deprioritized. After reviewing the list of active contracts, we found that almost none support global health R&D, which has long been a cornerstone of USAID's work. These cancellations risk squandering progress and previous U.S. funding toward innovations such as the world's first HIV vaccine, new tools to combat drug-resistant TB, next-generation malaria vaccines, and preparedness aimed at improving access to malaria, TB, and HIV medications for children. These bipartisan projects must remain a core part of USAID/State Department's mission and be reaffirmed in the FY26 appropriations bill.

USAID has provided unparalleled support for the late-stage development of global health technologies for decades. It is the only U.S. agency with a mandate to improve global health that supports the development of global health products from early-stage concepts to delivery around the world. USAID identifies innovation gaps, sponsors clinical trials, and scales new technologies to communities in need. Additionally, USAID uses novel financing models, builds interagency and multisectoral partnerships, and applies a business mindset to stretch the U.S. government's dollar

for maximum impact. The agency's unique value lies in its ability to drive late-stage R&D and scale-up of products that offer significant public health benefits but would not otherwise be funded. This unique capacity should be preserved and strengthened as part of any reorganization.

To be clear, we fully support a thoughtful review of programs to ensure efficiency and good stewardship of taxpayer dollars. We urge Congress to renew its request for an annual R&D investments report from USAID and to review the report, which shows the value of these investments. At the request of Congress, USAID releases this annual report on its health-related R&D investments and programs. These reports provide Congress and the global health community insight into how USAID is investing in global health research and progressing toward its health-related R&D strategy. The strategy is an important articulation of USAID's health innovation mission and (together with the reports) is an essential accountability tool to ensure that USAID is on track to meet its health R&D goals. This request is critical to ensuring that U.S. investments in global health research are efficient, coordinated, and impactful. This type of oversight is an essential component of responsible spending and effective programming.

It is clearer than ever that increases in investment for global health innovation are critical. There is still much that can be done—and must be done—to protect Americans' health and security. GHTC urges the Committee to continue to direct USAID/State Department to prioritize science, technology, and innovation as core pillars of its global health mission; allocate sufficient resources to support this work; and continue producing detailed, public annual reports on USAID's health R&D strategy.

Thank you.

[This statement was submitted by Dr. Kristie Mikus, Executive Director.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to update you on the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) important work to facilitate basic education worldwide. On behalf of our 90 developing country partners, I thank you for your steadfast leadership and commitment to international education programs and respectfully request that the subcommittee provide $150 million, under the Development Assistance account, as the U.S. Government's Fiscal Year 2026 contribution to the Global Partnership for Education.

THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION

GPE is a public-private partnership of donor and developing country governments, UNICEF, UNHCR, the World Food Program, the World Bank, other international organizations, civil society, the private sector and foundations, all partnering to ensure a more effective and efficient response to the global education challenge. GPE provides financial and technical support to 90 partner countries where eighty percent out-of-school children reside and where the National education systems require the most urgent support. The U.S. and other donor governments are engaged with local education groups where partners convene in country to provide support for the highest priorities and to monitor progress.

GPE'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE U.S.

The U.S. is a critical partner to GPE. To ensure coordination, the U.S. has held a seat on GPE's Board and been a member of the executive committee, and has closely engaged at a technical level on the development of GPE's policies and strengthening of its funding and operational model. U.S. foreign service officers have served as a member of local education groups in many partner countries, which are key priority-setting and program monitoring bodies. Additionally, U.S missions have worked with ministries of education in GPE-supported countries on the formulation of national plans, identification of key priorities for system transformation, and applications for GPE support. This close cooperation enables the combination of GPE's resources with U.S. bilateral education funding where feasible to improve outcomes.

Providing quality education is a national security and economic imperative that—when done correctly, and through partnerships like the one the U.S. has with GPE—fosters stable environments, creates economic opportunity, and empowers individuals—especially women and girls—to provide and seek opportunities for their families. Through bilateral and multilateral support, the U.S. has always been a

leader and without it, the world would be less safe, less secure, and certainly less prosperous.

GPE'S IMPACT

Improving Access to Education, Quality of Education and Learning Outcomes.—160 more children are in school in partner countries since GPE's inception in 2002, including 82 million additional girls. In 2024 alone, with GPE's portfolio of active grants at $2.5 billion, partner countries were able to distribute 48 million textbooks, train 481,000 teachers, and build or renovate close to 6,700 classrooms.

Enabling Self-Reliance.—GPE features a "compact"-based operating model that strengthens the link between development of national sector plans and identification of key policies to drive system transformation. GPE's partnership model breaks away from the sovereign donor-recipient paradigm. It brings together on an equal footing all partners that benefit from advancing education and skills, including the private sector, to give children the tools they need to navigate and thrive in the 21st century economy. GPE continues to place strong emphasis on domestic resource mobilization for education and more effective and equitable use of those resources. GPE offers innovative financing mechanisms that increase the volume and impact of donor investments. The Multiplier, GPE's flagship innovative financing tool, has raised nearly $4 billion in additional funding that otherwise would not have been available for education.

Education is the Engine of the Global Economy.—Over the past four decades, education has contributed to half of global economic growth, two-thirds of income growth among the world's poorest and forty percent of global extreme poverty reduction. Educating the workforce in emerging economies creates self-reliant economies, creating trading partners and reducing long-term burdens on U.S. taxpayers. Better education translates to more skilled, efficient and productive workers, which can lower costs in global supply chains, drive increased innovation and competition, and ultimately reduce the price of goods. GPE's partnership model seeks to build partner countries' stability and economic development through education, creating economic opportunities for donor and partner countries alike.

Successful investments depend on the availability of market-relevant skills that only education can provide. With its private sector partners uniquely placed to identify the skills needed in the labor market, GPE provides a platform for public-private partnerships to ensure education systems equip their students with both foundational knowledge and practical skills to thrive in an ever-evolving economy. GPE partners with more than 60 private sector and philanthropic partners, including U.S. companies such as Google, to help drive more private financing into education in emerging markets. Increased private financing in these emerging economies will help to reduce aid dependency in the long run.

Responsive Support for Fragile or Conflict-Affected Countries.—GPE is committed to making sure no child is left behind, particularly in crises that disrupt education. Millions of children are affected by conflict, natural disasters, complex humanitarian emergencies, and fragility. Increasingly, the world's out-of-school children live in countries facing war and violence. As a result, they are deprived of their education. Ensuring access to education protects the rights of children and youth amid chaos while instilling a sense of normalcy and shoring up resilience.

GPE's support reached the hardest-to-reach children: 70% are in countries affected by conflict and fragility, which have some of the highest rates of out-of-school children and the lowest levels of learning but lack the resources to sustainably build their education systems. GPE has developed flexible, accelerated, and responsive funding policies that enable swift and flexible support when crises unfold that create extensive challenges to education systems. Recent examples include:

—In Ukraine, GPE continues its dialogue with the government to best to stem the learning losses caused by the war. Through GPE's matching fund, the "Multiplier," GPE has matched over $25 million in cash and in-kind support from Microsoft, Google, and UNESCO, totaling more than $51 million in education assistance.

—In Afghanistan, where the Taliban has banned girls' education past the sixth grade, GPE continues to convene partners on the ground and has approved grants totaling $110 million to support children's education. GPE support helps children participate in community-based education and procure textbooks for secondary school girls who are still not allowed to attend school.

Education and Peace.—Education is among the most effective expenditure against political and economic insecurity and a buffer against displacement and radicalization. In 2024, the Institute for Economics and Peace and GPE conducted

a study that reaffirmed the potential for education to build peaceful societies. The study highlighted that higher rates of completion of both primary and lower secondary school shows a positive correlation with factors known to create and sustain peaceful societies. It also revealed that countries with higher years of schooling experience fewer conflicts and an increase in safety and security.

America's foreign assistance programs have a direct impact on the security and economic conditions here at home. Poor education systems create fertile ground for instability, extremism and anti-American sentiment. The search for better education opportunities is also a significant push factor for migration. Education and peace are strongly correlated: investing in education helps prevent the conditions that lead to failed States, terrorism and mass migration. In the long run, investments in education will help reduce costly U.S. military interventions abroad. Education is among the most effective expenditure against political and economic insecurity and a buffer against displacement and radicalization.

GPE's support to Central America and the Caribbean helps ensure opportunities for children so that there is school to job transition, more regional stability and less migration. For example, in Guatemala, GPE supported returning youth migrants by providing "second-chance" learning pathways and certifying their skills so that they can stay in their communities, find gainful employment, be self-reliant, and contribute to local economic development. The goal is that by 2026, 28,000 children and adolescents, including returned migrants, have achieved reintegration into the National educational system.

Supporting Girls' Education.—Ensuring that girls have access to education has been a top priority of GPE since its inception. Investments in school-age girls have the highest returns and is a smart economic investment: the cost of limited educational opportunities for girls is colossal, standing at between $15 and $30 trillion dollars in lost lifetime productivity and earnings. The results are clear: since 2002, twice as many girls have been enrolled in school in partner countries. Recent examples include:

—In Kenya, GPE brought together private sector partners Ecobank Foundation, Avanti Communications and the Rotary clubs in Kenya, as well as the government of Kenya, to address some of the challenges that affect girls' access to education.

—In El Salvador, a $10 million GPE Matching "Multiplier" grant combined with $5 million from GPE's Girls' Education Accelerator is working to boost efforts to close the gap in girls' education. The targeted funding will address harmful social norms from an early age and provide critical learning assessments.

School Meals.—Good health and nutrition are critical for children's learning. Approximately 180 million school age children live with malnutrition and 1 billion children are at high risk of suffering from food insecurity. This threatens the education, growth, and development of children and adolescents worldwide. School meals are the largest social safety net in the world, currently reaching over 400 million children every day worldwide. School meals also support local economies, create jobs and livelihoods in communities, and ultimately help break the links between hunger, an unsustainable food systems and the learning crisis. GPE supports countries to deliver school nutrition outcomes, in turn bolstering children's learning outcomes.

—In Haiti, schools are essential for providing protection for children and youth and stopping recruitment of Haiti youth into gangs (more than 60% of gang members are children in Haiti). GPE programs leverage schools to provide essential services to children, including food, psychosocial support, and learning opportunities. The World Food Program (WFP) provided support from a grant approved by the McGovern Dole program, which triggered the GPE Matching fund of $19m, $33m co-financing under the WFP program, $15m from the Inter-American Development Bank and $10m co-financing from Education Above All (EAA). The program is now effective, and school meals are supported during this academic year.

FISCAL YEAR 2026 SUPPORT FOR GPE

Mr. Chairman, I urge the subcommittee to provide a Fiscal Year 2026 U.S. contribution to the Global Partnership for Education of $150 million. This request reflects GPE's commitment to strengthening global economies and building national security by fostering stable, educated societies that are less susceptible to conflict and extremism. Educated populations drive economic growth, which in turn creates new consumers for U.S. goods and services—from technology to manufacturing. Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Laura Frigenti, Chief Executive Officer.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GLOBAL TIES U.S.

Dear Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee:

I submit the following Outside Witness Testimony in support of FY 2026 funding for U.S. Department of State Educational and Cultural Exchange (ECE) Programs, with a focus on the flagship U.S. Department of State International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP).

I present this on behalf of Global Ties U.S., the National leader in connecting U.S. citizens and communities with global leaders through international exchange and public diplomacy programs that make the United States a safer, stronger, and more prosperous nation. I am also proud to submit this on behalf of our Nationwide Global Ties Network, an agile, reliable, and consistent partner to the U.S. Department of State in advancing U.S. foreign policy goals. The Global Ties Network includes 75 Community-Based Member organizations that implement exchange programs primarily funded via the ECE budget in 115 cities and towns across all 50 U.S. States each year. What unites us is our commitment to excellence in implementing the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and serving as the National infrastructure for U.S. public diplomacy programs that engage U.S. citizens. Joining me in this submission are the leaders of our Network's Community-Based Member organizations representing the States of most of the subcommittee's members.

We know firsthand the value that U.S. public diplomacy and international exchange programs bring to our National security and to the economic prosperity of our cities and workforces. We join today in asking for your support to secure the Educational and Cultural Exchange (ECE) budget at $741 million and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) at $105 million in the FY 2026 appropriations process.

The IVLP is our country's flagship exchange program and one of the most effective, low-cost U.S. foreign policy tools that exists; helping our frontline diplomats at U.S. embassies identify and influence key international leaders and decision-makers. The IVLP creates networks of current and future political, civic, and business leaders in areas critical for our National security, such as law enforcement, cybersecurity, science, and emerging technologies. IVLP alumni include more than 550 current and past heads of States, a dozen Nobel Laureates, and 230,000+ leaders in nearly every professional field.

IVLP also makes us stronger and more prosperous because it happens in our cities and towns. These global influencers learn about and build trust with the United States while traveling across the United States. Consequentially, the Nationwide Global Ties Network contributes to American prosperity by generating an 11:1 return on the investment for the U.S. economy overall. In our last program year, we turned $7.1 million in Federal funding for our Community-Based Member organizations into $81.7 million in local economic impact. This economic impact extends to our workforce. Among the 250,000 American volunteers who participate in these exchange programs through their communities, 63% of those surveyed say they have acquired new skills that enable them to perform their jobs more effectively right here at home.

The United States needs this competitive edge for our workforce, for our economic security, and for our U.S. foreign policy to succeed. In the growing competition for global influence, IVLP and other exchanges help counter the influence of adversaries and promote U.S. interests with international leaders. The U.S. public diplomacy playbook is the envy of the world, and of China especially. China now outspends us 4:1 in public diplomacy, spending roughly $8 billion a year to influence global populations to advance its political objectives. IVLP and other U.S. Department of State-funded exchange programs in the ECE budget are low-cost, effective tools that help maintain and build America's influence. They are one of the best returns on investment in the Federal Government.

The Global Ties Network creates strong and enduring value for U.S. foreign policy and for our American communities, consistently delivering in its ability to support U.S. national and economic security in all 50 States. A cut to IVLP would mean losing this national infrastructure that America leverages annually to support our alliances, and our citizens.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, we respectfully request your support to secure FY 2026 funding for Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs at no less than the current enacted level ($741 million), and within that at least $105M for the IVLP to help the Global Ties Network support the U.S. govern-

ment in making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous—and to support local businesses and communities in your home States.

We thank you for your support and leadership.

SIGNED BY:

Katherine A. Brown, Ph.D., President & CEO, Global Ties U.S.

Jacquelyn Shipe, Chief Executive Officer, Global Ties Alabama, Huntsville, Alabama

Toni Carr, Executive Director, Global Ties Arkansas, Little Rock, Arkansas

David Santoro, President & CEO, Pacific Forum International, Honolulu, Hawaii

Jennifer Lundeen Dixon, Executive Director, WorldChicago, Chicago, Illinois

Courtney Brooks, President & CEO, Global Ties KC, Kansas City, Kansas/Missouri

Xiao Yin Zhao, President, World Affairs Council of Kentucky and Southern Indiana, Louisville, Kentucky

Tim Horgan, Executive Director, World Affairs Council of New Hampshire, Manchester, New Hampshire

Bob Lieser, Senior Director, Tulsa Global Alliance, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Derrick Olsen, President, WorldOregon, Portland, Oregon

Dickson Monk, Executive Director, Columbia World Affairs Council, Columbia, South Carolina

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HALO TRUST (USA), MINES ADVISORY GROUP (U.S.), LEGACIES OF WAR, PEACETREES VIETNAM

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS DESTRUCTION PROGRAM

As humanitarian demining organizations, The HALO Trust (USA), Mines Advisory Group (MAG) U.S., and PeaceTrees Vietnam submit this testimony as partners of the U.S. Government in addressing threats to peace, security, and human lives posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and insecure weapons stockpiles. HALO, MAG, and PeaceTrees Vietnam are implementing partners of the Department of State's Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) program, and are helping to save lives and restore livelihoods in nearly 40 countries and territories. This testimony is also supported by Legacies of War, a renowned advocacy and educational organization representing the Lao-American, Cambodian-American and Vietnamese-American communities.

State Department humanitarian demining and related programs promote U.S. foreign policy goals and play a critical role in conflict response. By removing explosives, keeping weapons out of the hands of terrorists, cartels, and other criminal groups, strengthening security partnerships, and creating new markets for American business interests, these programs make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Given the importance of global demining and weapons security programs, we respectfully ask that you include the following requests in the FY 2026 SFOPS budget:

1. $290 million for the State Department's Conventional Weapons Destruction account;
2. Allocations for Conventional Weapons Destruction in specific countries: $80,000,000 for programs in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, additional funds above the prior year's level for programs in Sri Lanka, Angola, and Zimbabwe, and sustained support for demining activities in Ukraine.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS DESTRUCTION (CWD) ACCOUNT

State Department CWD programs serve three primary national security and U.S. foreign policy goals: (1) To enhance U.S. and global security by destroying and securing weapons at risk of diversion to terrorists, insurgents, and other violent nonstate actors, including MANPADS, (2) To improve stability and prosperity by clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination, thereby returning land to safe and productive use, and (3) To promote US foreign policy.[1] Specifically, Conventional Weapons Destruction promotes American interests in the following ways:

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[1] U.S.A., Department of State, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. (2024). *The United States' Commitment to Conventional Weapons Destruction* (23rd ed., Fiscal Year 2023, pg. 5). Waynesboro, VA: McClung Companies

Making America Safer

While demining programs remove explosive hazards that threaten U.S. forces abroad, weapons security management programs provide security upgrades to weapons storehouses, train local militaries and police forces in weapons stockpile management, and support the destruction of obsolete small arms, light weapons, and conventional ammunition. This includes the securing of shoulder-launched missiles capable of downing military and civilian aircraft (MANPADS). These programs keep weapons and explosive materials from falling into the wrong hands, including terrorist groups that could threaten the U.S. or our allies, such as in Somalia. In West Africa, this work counters terrorism by preventing weapons trafficking across the Sahel, where violent extremism is a growing global threat. Further, in the Northern Triangle, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, and the CARICOM region, weapons and ammunition security management programs also help to combat the illicit flow of black-market weapons that can end up in the hands of gangs and other criminal groups, fueling violence and a driver of emigration.

Making America Stronger

CWD programs strengthen security partnerships with host governments including across Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, Africa, Europe, and Latin America-regions where the U.S. is competing with China and Russia for influence. This form of American assistance is also cost effective, widely popular, and highly visible; demining teams sport U.S. flags on their equipment and vehicles, and both local populations and host governments credit the United States for this impactful and life-saving work. This further strengthens American influence and soft power amongst local populations while building good will with host governments.

Making America More Prosperous

CWD activities promote economic development and support peace and stability—creating conditions for U.S. trade and investment. Within weeks of mine-clearance, farmers can return to their land, and communities can build roads, schools, hospitals, and vital infrastructure; turning aid recipients into new markets, promoting self-sufficiency, and helping economies recover from conflict. In Ukraine, for example, which has already lost over $70 billion in agricultural revenue due to the conflict,[2] HALO has found that restoring 50,000 hectares of Ukraine's farmland could generate over $600 million annually in economic activity. Further, as the conflict has created global food shortages that have directly impacted grocery prices for American families, clearing the estimated 470,000 hectares of mine-contaminated farmland[3] in Ukraine is critical for driving down global food prices.

Secretary of State Rubio has also emphasized the importance of life-saving U.S. assistance in creating a world where America can prosper. Explosive remnants of war kill thousands a year; at least 5,757 people were killed or injured by mines or other explosives across 55 countries and territories in 2023. At least 1,498 of these casualties, nearly 40%, were children.[4]

CWD PROGRAMS IN UKRAINE, LAOS, VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, SRI LANKA, ANGOLA, AND ZIMBABWE

Ukraine already contained significant landmine and explosive contamination in the eastern region before the recent invasion. The Ukrainian government estimates that now nearly 30% of the country may be contaminated with landmines and other UXO[5] that will threaten civilians for years to come. Demining is critical to removing hazards from roads, fields, and buildings, facilitating reconstruction and agricultural recovery. Demining partners in Ukraine are also working with local authorities to build local capacity for landmine clearance; an appropriation at the level of past supplementals for CWD programs in Ukraine is an investment that will support a safer and more self-sufficient Ukraine in the years to come.

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[2] Roman Neyter, Sergiy Zorya, and Oleksandr Muliar (February 2024). Agricultural War Damages, Losses, and Needs Review (pg. 4, 20). Kyiv, Ukraine: Kyiv School of Economics. Retrieved from: https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RDNA3__eng.pdf.

[3] Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (2023, March). "Oleskii Reznikov: Action plan for demining agricultural land for sowing campaign approved." *Gov.ua—State sites of Ukraine.* Retrieved from: http://kmu.gov.ua/en/news/oleksii-reznikov-skhvaleno-plan-zakhodiv-iz-rozminuvannia-silskohospodarskykh-zemel-dlia-provedennia-posivnoi.

[4] Landmine Monitor (2024, November). Landmine Monitor 2024. The Monitor. Retrieved from: https://www.the-monitor.org/reports/landmine-monitor-2024.

[5] Ministry of Economy of Ukraine. "Ukraine needs 10 times more humanitarian demining specialists than it has now: Yuliia Svyrydenko" (2023, April 20). *State Sites of Ukraine.* Retrieved from https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/dlia-humanitarnoho-rozminuvannia-ukrainy-potribno-v-desiatky-raziv-bilshe-fakhivtsiv-nizh-ie-zaraz-iuliia-svyrydenko.

Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia remain heavily impacted by U.S. cluster bomblets and other explosive hazards. Laos is considered the most heavily bombed country in history, suffering over 50,919 casualties from explosive remnants of war.[6] Cambodia, which contains additional significant landmine contamination has suffered over 65,005 casualties from explosive hazards since 1979.[7] In Vietnam, at least 105,086 casualties from explosive threats have been recorded.[8] More resources are needed to remove these deadly items, demonstrate continued resolve to removing U.S. legacy ordnance, and strengthen diplomatic relations. An appropriation of $80 million in FY26 would expedite ongoing clearance efforts and demonstrate strong U.S. leadership in the region. This is especially impactful as the U.S. directly competes with China in the demining space; a $4.4 million agreement between China and Cambodia for demining was announced in February 2025.[9]

Since the end of Sri Lanka's decades-long civil war in 2009, U.S. demining assistance has been critical to allowing thousands of displaced families to return to their homes and develop their land. U.S. demining efforts have also enabled the reopening of schools and hospitals, the reconstruction of thousands of homes, and the reconstruction of the Jaffna railway—enabling access to Sri Lanka's northern ports. More than 300,000 mines have already been destroyed, and increased funding will keep Sri Lanka on track to be mine-impact free by 2028. Continuing support in Sri Lanka is critical for combatting the influence of China in the region.

Landmines in Angola have injured or killed more than 80,000 people since they were first used in its civil war,[10] but with the help of U.S. foreign aid, over 120,000 landmines have been destroyed. Demining must continue, especially in the rural areas of Angola, where some communities have been waiting decades for assistance. This clearance is also critical to supporting the development of the Lobito Corridor, where more than 100 minefields will hamper expansion of this vital commerce route that would support U.S. access to critical minerals and energy trade. Increasing funding for demining in Angola is also necessary for the U.S. to implement *The DELTA Act,* legislation passed in December 2018 and signed by President Trump in support of wilderness management in the Okavango Delta region. In southeast Angola, landmines near the headwaters of the Okavango Delta kill elephants and other wildlife, prevent the area from being developed for ecotourism, hamper efforts to conduct biodiversity research, and interfere with anti-poaching initiatives.

Zimbabwe possesses very dense, unfenced minefields close to houses, schools, and clinics that kill livestock and separate communities from viable sources of water. Over 1,600 casualties[11] have occurred due to explosive accidents. Due to the predictable mine-laying patterns along the Zimbabwean borders, demining teams in Zimbabwe have one of the highest mine-destruction rates of any global program. Supporting increased funding for CWD programs in Zimbabwe will allow the country to achieve mine-free status as quickly as possible, as well as continue strengthening American soft power in a country looking towards China for assistance as part of their "Look East" policy.

CONCLUSION

Since 1993, the U.S. has led global demining efforts, providing assistance and building relationships in more than 125 countries and territories for CWD activities.[12] This has also helped contribute to more than 30 countries and territories becoming mine-impact free.[13] We hope to see many more countries soon join this list.

U.S. demining and weapons security programs not only save lives, but also promote U.S. interests worldwide. By strengthening global security partnerships, secur-

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[6] Lao PDR—Impact (2023, September 5). *The Landmine Monitor.* Retrieved from https://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2023/lao-pdr/impact.aspx.

[7] Cambodia—Impact (2023, December 20). *The Landmine Monitor.* Retrieved from http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2023/Cambodia/impact.aspx.

[8] Vietnam—Impact (2021, February 11). *The Landmine Monitor.* Retrieved from http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2023/Vietnam/impact.aspx.

[9] Niem Chheng (February 2025). "Chinese government continues demining support to tune of $4.4M." *Phnom Penh Post.* Retrieved from https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/chinese-government-continues-demining-support-to-tune-of-4-4m.

[10] Angola—Impact (2021, February 10). *The Landmine Monitor.* Retrieved from http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2021/Angola/impact.aspx.

[11] Zimbabwe—Impact. (2022, November 17). Retrieved from https://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2023/zimbabwe/impact.aspx.

[12] U.S.A., Department of State, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. (2024). *The United States' Commitment to Conventional Weapons Destruction* (23rd ed., Fiscal Year 2023, pg. 5). Waynesboro, VA: McClung Companies.

[13] "The deadly legacy of landmines" (April 3, 2023). *UN News.* Retrieved from: https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/04/1135252.

ing dangerous weapons that could fall into the hands of terror and criminal groups, and enabling stabilization and recovery, Conventional Weapons Security programs are working towards a safer world and a safer, stronger, and more prosperous America.

For these reasons, we hope the subcommittee will support strong funding for the State Department CWD program, for CWD programs in Ukraine, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Angola, and Zimbabwe.

Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Chris Whatley, Executive Director, The HALO Trust (USA), Shari Bryan, Executive Director, Mines Advisory Group (U.S.), Sera Koulabdara, Chief Executive Officer, Legacies of War, Claire Yunker, Executive Director, PeaceTrees Vietnam.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HELEN KELLER INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony to the subcommittee on behalf of Helen Keller International regarding critical programs in global health. We are submitting this testimony during a pivotal moment for America's role in global health. The drastic reduction of global health programs and elimination of development assistance proposed in the President's FY26 budget request, alongside cuts to USAID and the proposed reorganization of the State Department, threaten to reverse decades of bipartisan progress. We are especially concerned by the President's budget proposal to eliminate non-emergency nutrition programs and funding aimed at eradicating neglected tropical diseases. These programs save countless lives and contribute to making America a safer, stronger, and more prosperous nation.

Therefore, we are requesting a level funding commitment for FY2026 appropriations. We respectfully request a minimum funding level for the following global health programs: $165 million for nutrition, $114.5 million for neglected tropical diseases, and $4.5 million for child blindness, with the topline funding level for Global Health Programs of $6.395 billion for the Department of State and $4.025 billion for USAID. These programs provide lifesaving services and prevent deaths from malnutrition and disabling and debilitating effects of disease and preventable blindness.

Helen Keller Intl is a leading nonprofit organization with programs in 20 countries in Africa, Asia, and the United States. We were co-founded in 1915 by Helen Keller, who lost her sight and hearing as a child and was an advocate for the poor and marginalized as an adult. Together with a global community of supporters, we ensure that everyone has the opportunity—as Helen did—to reach their true potential. We fulfill this mission by designing and implementing programs based on science and local collaboration that save lives, improve sight, and improve nutrition for more than 80 million people each year.

Today, we are as determined as ever to accomplish even more on behalf of children and families in the countries where we work. Our work to deliver the building blocks for good health, sound nutrition, and clear vision pays dividends for economic development while promoting stability in the communities where we work. Continued US investments in nutrition, NTDs, and blindness prevention will contribute to US foreign policy goals of making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous while also saving lives.

Malnutrition is one of the most urgent global health challenges, threatening the lives and potential of millions of children, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. It is responsible for nearly half of all child deaths under the age of five. For those who survive, malnutrition often leads to lifelong physical and cognitive impairments that reduce their ability to thrive academically, economically, and socially. These long-term consequences hinder individual potential and undermine entire nations' broader stability and prosperity. The security threats of malnutrition are two-fold: global health security and national security. Malnutrition significantly weakens immune response, exacerbating the spread of infectious diseases within and beyond borders, creating prime conditions for disease outbreaks. Food insecurity and malnutrition fuel global instability, making the US less safe. For example, improving nutrition outcomes in conflict-affected areas such as northwest Nigeria mitigates the socioeconomic conditions that extremist groups like Boko Haram and the Lakurawa group exploit, thereby reducing recruitment and insurgency risks. Instability increases the risks of conflict, economic disruption, and migration, particularly in regions with US interests and allies.

U.S. investments in global nutrition programs have not only mitigated these security risks, but they have made a tangible difference in saving lives and promoting

global partnerships and economic growth. These programs reached 28 million children under five and 11 million pregnant women in 2023 alone, directly addressing the root causes of malnutrition. The U.S. government's leadership in these efforts has led to a dramatic reduction in preventable child and maternal deaths, nearly halving them since 1990. These programs also strengthen the capacity of countries to finance and manage their own nutrition and health policies, reducing dependency on foreign aid and making them more resilient against external influence of malign actors and governments that are not allied with the U.S. By improving child nutrition, U.S. investment both sets children on a path to healthier, more productive futures and creates stronger, more stable global partners. These investments directly reflect American values and build enduring relationships with countries that are critical to U.S. security and prosperity.

Many of the most effective interventions to combat malnutrition, such as multiple micronutrient supplementation, breastfeeding support, vitamin A supplementation, and ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), focus on the critical 1,000-day period from a woman's pregnancy to a child's second birthday. In the last year, Helen Keller screened more than 654,000 children for acute malnutrition across six countries, with approximately 81% of individuals provided treatment for severe or moderate acute malnutrition with Helen Keller support successfully recovered. This screening is essential to connect families to the necessary treatment, such as RUTF produced by American farmers and manufacturers, to recover from the most severe forms of malnutrition. These interventions are among the most efficient tools available to save lives and improve long-term outcomes for children, helping to reduce the global burden of poverty, poor education, and low economic productivity. These are not just acts of charity, they are investments that return $23 for every $1 spent, bolstering global economic growth. Conversely, an estimated $21 trillion in economic productivity and social costs would be incurred due to malnutrition. These programs directly benefit American businesses, workers, and partnerships while providing a high return on investment that ensures families, communities, and nations can grow and be self-sufficient.

Likewise, investing in eliminating Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) has far-reaching benefits for global health and U.S. interests. For over a decade, the U.S. government has been at the forefront of efforts to treat and eliminate diseases like trachoma, lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, onchocerciasis, and soil transmitted helminths, which can cause blindness and disability. More than a billion people suffer from NTDs—parasitic and bacterial infections that disable, disfigure, and devastate communities. They are diseases of poverty, and their unchecked spread impairs education, weakens economies, and contributes to unrest.

The NTD program is one of the U.S. government's most successful public-private partnerships. Every $1 invested by the U.S. Government in fighting NTDs leverages $26 in donated medicines, totaling $31.3 billion leveraged to date. With these drug donations, the majority of NTD medicines distributed come at no cost to the U.S., representing the best buy in foreign assistance. In addition to this partnership, reducing the burden of NTDs promotes economic development and increases markets for U.S. products globally by fostering a more productive workforce and stable environment for U.S. business interests in emerging markets. A recent study showed that Nigeria could gain approximately $19 billion in increased productivity by meeting its NTD elimination targets by the year 2030. Another study has shown that deworming school children can raise future earning potential by up to 20%.

We are on the verge of eliminating many of these NTDs and should not stop now. U.S. investments in NTD elimination programs have already delivered over 3.3 billion treatments globally. These initiatives have trained millions of individuals and strengthened local health systems and capacity. To date, 14 countries have eliminated an NTD with U.S. support, and seven countries are expected to eliminate an NTD within the next 2 years with continued investment. This progress represents a diplomatic victory that strengthens U.S. international relationships and reinforces America's status as a global superpower. NTD elimination is a targeted, short-term investment with a clear exit plan. Yet even one missed dose of treatment can set us back in achieving elimination. If we dismantle these programs now, we risk losing the progress we have made towards diseases elimination, letting donated medicines expire, and wasting the taxpayer dollars already invested in eliminating these diseases. By funding NTD elimination programs, the U.S. is not only alleviating suffering but also strengthening health systems and enhancing our Nation's ability to detect and defend against existing and emerging disease threats, ultimately keeping Americans safe.

Just as U.S. investments in NTDs help prevent debilitating and economically devastating diseases, support for child blindness programs addresses another preventable barrier to human potential. Currently, 1.4 million children worldwide are blind,

and much of this suffering is preventable. Children who are blind or visually impaired and who live in poverty in developing countries must depend on their families and on government health systems, which in most cases have limited capacity to meet the needs of blind children. These children are at grave risk of being ill-health, poorly educated, and less productive without access to critical eye health and rehabilitation services. The U.S. has helped reduce the leading cause of childhood blindness—vitamin A deficiency—through strategic interventions that restore sight and improve children's lives. Helen Keller is a recognized leader in distributing vitamin A capsules to children, reaching nearly 44 million children last year. Providing vitamin A capsules twice a year can reduce child deaths by more than 25% for little more than a dollar a dose and significantly helps prevent childhood blindness, along with chronic malnutrition, by ensuring adequate intake of this essential nutrient.

In low-income countries, congenital cataract is another leading cause of vision impairment in children. The U.S. child blindness program provides critical eye screenings to identify cataracts and refractive errors, as well as supporting corrective surgery for cataracts. These programs benefit U.S. companies, as U.S. equipment and innovations for cataracts surgery are used worldwide. By 2027, cataract devices and equipment are expected to be a $9 billion industry. By ensuring that children can see clearly, the U.S. enables them to pursue education, contribute to their communities, and ultimately become productive members of their economies. The ability to learn, work, and participate in society strengthens the individual and the larger global economy.

Thank you for considering Helen Keller Intl's testimony and recommendations. These investments reflect America's values—and they deliver concrete returns for our economy, our security, and our standing in the world. As Helen Keller said: *"The welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all."* Let us move forward together in that spirit.

[This statement was submitted by Sarah Bouchie, President and Chief Executive Officer.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

On behalf of the Institute of International Education (IIE), I am pleased to submit testimony in support of the Fulbright Program ($287.8 million), the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program ($17 million), and Scholar Rescue Fund Programs ($7 million).

In his FY2026 budget request to Congress, President Trump proposes to eliminate funding for the Fulbright and Gilman programs. America must have a globally engaged workforce, built through trusted international exchanges like Fulbright and Gilman. These programs, funded by the Department of State and administered by IIE, directly strengthen the United States' economic competitiveness, national security, and global leadership.

FULBRIGHT PROGRAM: ADVANCING U.S. PROSPERITY, SECURITY, AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Fulbright is the flagship U.S. government-sponsored international exchange program that directly impacts diplomacy, innovation and global commerce. Its alumni include 44 heads of state, 62 Nobel Laureates, and 93 Pulitzer Prize winners. Over the past 80 years Fulbright evolved in step with America's national priorities to cultivate leaders across sectors and around the world who are familiar and supportive of the United States. Fulbright operates through cost-sharing agreements with 89 partner governments, which collectively contribute over $90 million annually. Fulbright enjoys bi-partisan support and brings benefits to all 50 U.S. States.

We respectfully request the Committee's support for level funding of $287.8 million in FY2026 which will allow Fulbright to:

—*Boost U.S. Economic Leadership.*—Fulbright alumni include CEOs, entrepreneurs, and innovators who drive industries central to the U.S. economy. They start and lead businesses that create jobs and generate high-value exports. Nearly all of the world's top companies employ Fulbright alumni. Dr. Craig Barrett, who was a Fulbright U.S. Scholar to Denmark, served as president, CEO and chairman of the Intel Corporation before retiring in 2009. Today, he is a leading advocate for the value of technology in improving national social and economic standards. Amar Bose, a Fulbright U.S. Student to India, created one of America's most innovative and successful audio technology companies—the Bose Corporation. At its conception, the company supported NASA and the U.S. military with improved audio communications and later developed into a

global brand of commercial sound products. Foreign Fulbright students also contribute significantly to U.S. universities and communities. In the last academic year, international students, including Fulbrighters, added over $40 billion to the U.S economy and supported more than 365,000 U.S. jobs.

—*Strengthen U.S. Security.*—Fulbright provides pathways for U.S. service members to broaden their global perspectives. After serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, Austin Sowers became a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Honduras. He taught at a bilingual secondary school and a teachers' college, while offering free English-language workshops to youth affected by poverty, natural disasters and gang violence. His combined Marine Corps and Fulbright experiences helped strengthen U.S. ties in Latin America.

—*Expand U.S. Technological Influence.*—Fulbright has fueled thousands of scientific discoveries in STEM fields, reinforcing America's leadership in the global knowledge economy. Fulbright alumni have earned Nobel Prizes for breakthroughs like the MRI, RNA transcription and cancer immunology. Dr. Elizabeth Jens, a rocket propulsion expert, came to Stanford as a Fulbright scholar from Australia. Now a systems engineer at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory she authored the Hybrid Rocket Propulsion Design Handbook and was honored by the Australian Embassy for advancing U.S-Australia cooperation in innovation policy.

Sustaining the Fulbright Program at $287.8 million in FY2026 is not just a continuation of a legacy—it is a strategic investment in America's economic strength, national security and influence in the world's fastest-growing regions.

BENJAMIN A. GILMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: INVESTING IN AMERICA'S ECONOMIC POWER AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Since 2001, the Gilman Program has provided over 44,000 Pell Grant-eligible U.S. undergraduates with global experiences, equipping them with critical skills needed for U.S. economic competitiveness. As a merit-based and prestigious initiative, Gilman expands opportunities for students of all backgrounds and helps them become globally fluent leaders in business, technology, education and government. Veterans of the U.S. military are given preference. The Congressionally created Gilman-McCain Scholarship supports dependents of active-duty service members by providing them with funding to study abroad or participate in a career-oriented internship abroad.

Sustained funding of $17 million in FY2026 will ensure that the Gilman Program continues to:

—*Strengthen the U.S. Workforce.*—Gilman Scholars gain global competencies, making them better prepared for 21st-century jobs in business, trade, and leading-edge industries. A recent impact study found that Gilman alumni have created over 1,000 U.S.—based jobs and founded more than 400 new companies and organizations. Tristan Walker, a 2004 Gilman Scholar to the United Kingdom, is the founder of Walker & Company Brands. A nationally recognized entrepreneur and leader, he has been named one of Fortune's "World's Greatest Leaders" and appears on multiple influential lists including TIME 100 Next and Fortune's "40 Under 40." His flagship brand Bevel is now a category leader in major U.S. retailers.

—*Expand Economic Partnerships.*—Gilman alumni foster international networks that expand American influence around the globe. Gilman Scholars represent all 50 States and nearly 50% are first-generation college students. Approximately 60% of Gilman Scholars come from small cities, towns, and rural communities. By supporting undergraduate students who have high financial need, the program creates opportunities to develop a global mindset and become more competitive in the workforce. Molly Bennard, a 2002 Gilman Scholar to Spain, is President of International Operations at Focus Financial Partners, where she leads global growth strategy and oversees international partner firms. With a background in investment banking, corporate strategy, and private equity advisory, Molly has built a career at the intersection of finance, leadership, and global business. She is a CPA and CFA charter holder, with degrees from the Wharton School and Columbia Business School. Her study abroad experience in Spain helped lay the foundation for a career marked by international perspective and strategic impact.

—*Support U.S. Leadership in Key Regions.*—Gilman Scholars study in strategically important locations, gaining expertise that directly benefits U.S. national security. The program grew to over 170 countries since 2001, including countries where languages critical to U.S. national security are spoken. The demand

for the program remains high. Over 163,000 students have applied since the inception of the program. In fiscal year 2023, over 13,000 applications from highly qualified students were received and approximately 3,400 scholarships awarded. The program recently received a record-breaking number of applications, a 25% increase over the previous year.

The Gilman Program continues to demonstrate a commitment to our Armed Services and military families. Nathan Hesse, a 2008 Gilman Scholar to The Gambia, is the acting Director of the Command & Seamanship Training Squadron at the U.S. Naval Academy and an associate fellow at its Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership. His diverse career includes roles as a captain and educator at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, ESL teacher, policy associate, and researcher. Hesse studied abroad at the University of The Gambia while attending St. Mary's College of Maryland and later earned a graduate degree in Latin American and Hemispheric Studies from George Washington University.

In addition, Gilman Scholars positively impact their communities while carrying out follow-on service projects that aim to give back to their home communities. They serve as influential role models by their exemplary achievement through their international exchange experience and service. Many continue to pursue advanced degrees and are active in seeking solutions to challenges facing our country.

Maintaining long-standing bipartisan support for the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program at the FY25 funding level of $17 million will continue to ensure our National security, economic prosperity, and create a pipeline to develop future American leaders.

THE IIE SCHOLAR RESCUE FUND (IIE–SRF): PROVIDING LIFESAVING SUPPORT FOR PERSECUTED ACADEMICS

The Scholar Rescue Program arranges and co-funds temporary fellowships to research, teach or guest-lecture for persecuted scholars from authoritarian regimes and conflict zones at higher education institutions in safe locations globally. Over the past decade, IIE–SRF scholars have brought their unique expertise and fostered cross-cultural exchange at over 180 U.S. higher education institutions and more than 330 institutions internationally.

Level funding of $7 million in FY2026 will:

—*Strengthen America's Knowledge Economy.*—scholars placed in the U.S. bring direct benefits to American classrooms, communities, and economic growth. They expose undergraduate and graduate students to world class teaching, undertake world-class research, and contribute to building the local economy and workforce. Examples include:
  —A scholar of genetics and plant breeding from Afghanistan who revitalized a wheat-breeding program at the University of Missouri.
  —An Afghan veterinary microbiologist who conducted research at his host institution, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, on efforts to monitor antimicrobial resistance in chickens at slaughterhouses across the U.S.
  —A Cameroonian scholar of environmental sciences who managed a bioreactor-biochar research project that aimed to remove excess nitrates and phosphates in agricultural drainage water.

—*Contribute to R&D, innovation, and scientific progress,* in the U.S. and globally. Selected for their academic merit, IIE–SRF fellows are experts at the forefront of their fields who advance a wide range of critical research areas. Recent examples include:
  —A Syrian neuropharmacologist in the U.S. led a study that uncovered a promising novel treatment for Parkinson's, a neurodegenerative disease affecting an estimated 1 million Americans, that could also be effective for other disorders.
  —A Yemeni physicist in the U.S. studied the synthesis and application of halide perovskite nanocrystals, which are recognized for their potential use in solar cells, diodes, and lasers.

—*Protect U.S. security interests.*—In 2024, IIE–SRF scholars placed in the U.S. and globally taught more than 5,500 students, supervised more than 590 students, and delivered more than 300 lectures. Just in the past year, thirty-six universities across the United States hosted SRF scholars. University leaders report that IIE–SRF scholars make important contributions to the ecosystem of scholarship on their campuses, serve as role models that demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity, and enrich the fabric of campus communities.

BIPARTISAN COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The Fulbright, Gilman, and Scholar Rescue Fund Programs exemplify successful public-private partnerships that advance U.S. interests and influence worldwide. Their enduring success is a testament to Congress's longstanding bipartisan commitment to strengthening America's global influence, safeguarding national security, and promoting economic prosperity.

We urge the Committee to maintain funding for these programs as strategic investments in America's future.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

[This statement was submitted by Jason Czyz, President.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF INTERFAITH WORKING GROUP ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Chair Graham and Ranking Member Schatz and members of the subcommittee, we are Dr. Christine Sequenzia and Ursala Knudsen-Latta, testifying on behalf of the Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance as co-chairs of the group. We are grateful for the opportunity to submit written testimony and to advocate for the over 800 million people facing complex crises stemming from conflicts, rising costs of living, and climate change worldwide. Our testimony today will focus on the programs to which our multi-faith Working Group is committed. We share a belief in the moral obligation to provide food, safe water, medicine, emergency nutrition and so much more to those affected by poverty, conflict and marginalization around the world, especially children. We want to thank Chair Graham and Ranking Member Schatz for your commitment to strengthening the United States' role as a leader in both humanitarian assistance and international development programs, honoring the dignity of all, and supporting flourishing communities. We look forward to continuing to work with you and strengthening bipartisan support for emergency and non-emergency development aid delivery.

Founded in 2013, the Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance (IWGFA) is a multifaith coalition of dozens of organizations committed to saving lives and advancing the dignity of vulnerable and marginalized people around the world. We believe that every human being has inherent dignity and should be fulfilled of basic needs such as food, safe water, shelter, education, and the right to live freely. Through data-driven legislative advocacy in support of robust U.S. humanitarian and poverty-focused development assistance, we strive to support peace and prosperity in how the U.S. prevents and responds to global crises. As faith-based organizations, we bring together Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and other faith voices, standing in solidarity with one another centered around our common value of recognizing and upholding our shared humanity.

We write to you to express our grave concerns over the sudden terminations of critical foreign assistance work around the globe and the dismantling of USAID. Despite a small percentage of programs being allowed to continue, many organizations cannot restart even "life-saving" activities, in part due to payments being stopped and delayed. We ask you to act urgently to work with your colleagues in Congress and with the Administration to pay past invoices for work completed and restart funding and work on the wide array of U.S. foreign assistance programs. We recognize that all new administrations have the right to review ongoing programs against their policy goals and that such reviews are a standard part of any transition. However, the immediate closure of almost all life-saving humanitarian, peacebuilding, health, and poverty-focused development assistance will have fatal consequences and inflict vast harm on innocent people. Such actions are not in keeping with our Nation's core values and the will of the American people.

The Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance has been closely monitoring these complex crises leading to hunger and poverty hotspots around the world and would like to highlight the following areas. For example, despite claims otherwise, PEPFAR-funded organizations remain unfunded, underfunded or receiving conflicting messages regarding their ability to perform work, and many are locked out of the payment management system (PMS) for accessing PEPFAR funds.

A major health program in Kenya, serving 28,612 HIV/AIDS and TB patients, 67% women, including 621 children ages 0–14 years and 1,700 adolescents and young adults ages 15–24 years, has lost access to critical PEPFAR funding. The set of 14 clinics, founded by Christian faith-based organizations, used PEPFAR funds to provide care to impoverished people and tests 2,500 clients monthly. According to the program's director, "*Once we start turning patients away, desperation will set in, patients will lose hope and their health will quickly deteriorate, leading to fatal consequences. The majority of patients have lost confidence in our services already*

and it will be very difficult to get them to return for treatment even after resumption of funding." Without daily medication and testing, the director anticipates: increased HIV/AIDS-related deaths, increased infection rates, a reversal on progress made in epidemic control, decreased school attendance rates, decreased employment rates, and decreased economic stability historically seen in PEPFAR award countries. In addition, the director also anticipates a rise in Tuberculosis prevalence and related deaths without consistent treatment, leading to an increase in the global threat of antibiotic-resistant Tuberculosis.

We urge the U.S. Congress to scale up humanitarian investments, and continued funding for critical hunger, health, and poverty-focused programs. While representing less than one percent of the Federal budget, these programs provide a strong return on investment to the U.S. taxpayer because they help promote a healthier, more prosperous, and more stable world for everyone. Allowing the cuts to programs and agencies to continue unopposed by Congress will result in otherwise preventable deaths, the spread of infectious diseases including antibiotic resistance, and increased global poverty and instability. While we understand the need to reduce spending, the programs below work toward our broader goals of making America safer, stronger and more prosperous. To that end, we have requested funding in-line with stated goals and program effectiveness. Specifically, the IWGFA urges members of the subcommittee to prioritize funding in the following appropriations accounts:

—*$1.8 billion for Food for Peace (Title II).*—Food for Peace Title II programs provide emergency and long-term development food assistance targeting the most vulnerable populations affected by natural disasters, conflicts, and chronic food insecurity, while strengthening nutrition, water and sanitation services, agricultural productivity, and household income diversification. In 2022, USAID provided commodities such as wheat, split peas, sorghum, and vegetable oil to feed communities in the Horn of Africa, as well as ready-to-use therapeutic foods to treat acute malnutrition in children.

—*$265 million for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program.*—McGovern-Dole provides U.S. agricultural commodities as well as financial and technical assistance to low-income, food-insecure countries through establishing school feeding programs for preschool children, while also increasing local access to safe water, improving sanitation, and helping local farmers to bolster sustainable production of nutritious foods. In 2022, thanks to the McGovern-Dole Program, approximately 105,000 children and their families in Sri Lanka received rations sufficient to cover 3 months of food needs.

—*$10.3 billion for Global Health Programs.*—The United States has been a leader for decades in global health, saving tens of millions of lives, preventing the spread of infectious diseases, and strengthening local health systems. U.S. led global health programs have detected and responded to outbreaks of Ebola, MPox and other emerging disease outbreaks such as the resurgence of multidrug resistant tuberculosis, preventing their spread to the United States while strengthening global health security.

—*$920 million for the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Programming.*—The MCH account supports programs aimed at ending preventable maternal and child deaths through strengthening national health systems, treating diarrheal disease, malaria, and pneumonia, improving nutrition and access to safe water and sanitation services, and providing voluntary family planning and immunization support.

—*$300 million for Global Nutrition.*—Global Nutrition programs provide communities with the tools and resources to strengthen their nutrition and health through the direct delivery of health and nutrition services, capacity building and technical assistance to health centers and the training of health workers. Global Nutrition takes a particular focus on the first 1,000 days from the start of a pregnancy to the child's second birthday.

—*$4.153 billion for Development Assistance.*—Long-term poverty-focused development assistance is core to U.S. foreign policy and American values, by supporting more prosperous communities and enhancing resilience, to supporting peace. Development Assistance supports infrastructure projects that increase access to food, basic water and sanitation services, grow household incomes through enhanced agriculture productivity and support job training. Investing in Development Assistance reduces the need for future foreign assistance by helping reduce poverty and increase resilience globally.

—*$1.2 billion for the Global Food Security Strategy.*—The Global Food Security Strategy uses the expertise of a dozen Federal departments and agencies to end hunger by addressing its root causes. Also known as Feed the Future, this fund-

ing supports countries graduating from aid by improving agricultural productivity, strengthening local capacity and partnering with the private sector.

—*$290 Million for Democracy Fund & Human Rights and Democracy Fund.*—The Democracy Fund supports programs that strengthen rule of law, government accountability, independent media, and inclusive political space. Authoritarianism leads to increased conflict and instability and to counter this, these programs help stabilize emerging and fragile democracies and build institutional capacity, allowing fragile States to strengthen their resilience, address the needs of their citizens and stand on their own.

—*$4.829 billion for the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) Program.*—IDA provides critical humanitarian assistance to civilian populations in response to natural disasters, conflict and insecurity, and other sudden-onset emergencies in their home or host countries.

—*$75 million for the Complex Crises Fund (CCF).*—CCF allows the U.S. government to prevent and respond rapidly to emerging or unforeseen crises in fragile countries at a heightened risk of conflict and instability. Since its inception in 2010, CCF has provided $340 million to emergent crises in 36 countries, allowing for the quick mitigation of crises and ability to address unforeseen needs arising outside of planned programming.

—*$4.028 billion for the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA).*—MRA works to mitigate and resolve conflict-related displacement and support humanitarian action and diplomacy for displaced populations in highly impacted countries/regions such as those mentioned earlier.

—*$100 million for the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA).*—ERMA enables the United States to respond to sudden urgent humanitarian needs. ERMA has historically been underfunded at just $100,000. Instead of relying on supplemental funds to source the account, after the emergency has begun, EMRA should be fully resourced in advance.

—*$4.3 billion for the Economic Support Fund (ESF).*—ESF supports critical U.S. foreign policy priorities by providing economic and development assistance to countries of strategic importance, including in the Indo-Pacific and Western Hemisphere. This includes building economic resilience and strengthening food security.

—*$1 billion for the Green Climate Fund.*—GCF works in developing countries to lower greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience, including among smallholder farmers through climate-smart agriculture.

Appropriations Account	FY26 Request
Food for Peace	$1,800,000,000
McGovern Dole Food for Education	265,000,000
Global Health Programs	10,300.000,000
Maternal and Child Health (MCH)	920,000,000
Global Nutrition	300,000,000
Development Assistance	4,153,000,000
Global Food Security Strategy	1,200,000,000
Democracy Fund & Human Rights and Democracy Fund	290,000,000
International Disaster Assistance (IDA)	4,829,000,000
Complex Crises Fund (CCF)	75,000,000
Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)	4,028,000,000
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA)	100,000,000
Economic Support Fund (ESF)	4,300,000,000
Green Climate Fund	1,000,000,000

Many of these programs also support human rights and responsible and effective governance, while addressing complex emergencies and conflicts. These accounts are key to uplifting the lives of millions in poverty and facilitating increased global peace and stability. Any proposed cuts will substantially harm the U.S.' ability to help those most in need of aid, which will not only roll back decades of progress made on these global issues, but also jeopardize U.S. international standing, national security, and economic opportunities.

As faith-based organizations, we stand in solidarity with vulnerable and marginalized populations, centered around our shared humanity and values to uphold one another's humanity. We strive to build peace and prosperity through joint advocacy on U.S. policy and programs related to poverty-focused development assistance, humanitarian aid and crisis prevention.

May God give us all wisdom and guidance at this critical juncture.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and Members of the subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on the FY 2026 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has 16 offices globally and works in more than 40 countries around the world. IFAW takes a holistic approach to innovating solutions for tough conservation challenges like conflicts between humans and wildlife and illegal wildlife trafficking. Recognizing the unbreakable connections between the health and well-being of animals and people, we support and empower communities to coexist with and value native wildlife, and we help those communities develop tools to protect their wild heritage and safeguard it from international security threats. IFAW is grateful for this subcommittee's long history of championing strong conservation funding and appreciates its support in previous fiscal years. With that in mind, we respectfully request your continued commitment for the following programs in FY26: Biodiversity Programs ($365.75 million), the Sustainable Landscapes programs ($175.75 million), Tropical Forest and Coral Reefs Conservation Act (TFCRCA) implementation ($15 million), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) ($150.2 million), the Combating Wildlife Trafficking programs ($118.75 million), and the US Foundation for International Conservation ($100 million).

In today's global landscape, these conservation programs are more important than ever. For instance, every year natural disasters displace tens of millions of people worldwide, increase disease spread, fuel food insecurity, and drive human evacuation. Meanwhile, trafficking in wildlife and wildlife parts remains the fourth most lucrative criminal enterprise worldwide with an estimated annual revenue of $20 billion. Add in illegal logging and fishing, and that number skyrockets to $1 trillion or more. In addition to threatening our world's natural resources, these criminal enterprises undermine international security, destabilize communities, and make Americans less safe.

Given the severity of the challenges we face, IFAW respectfully asks the subcommittee for your continued support for the important conservation programs within your purview. Doing so will help to protect wildlife, improve the health of landscapes, and protect against future wildlife-borne zoonotic diseases, promote resilient ecosystems, mitigate natural disasters, and ensure the safety of communities both here and abroad. Investing in these critical programs will have the added benefit of demonstrating to the international community the importance of conservation not just for its own sake, but for the safety, security, and stability of humankind.

Biodiversity Conservation Programs support conservation efforts in more than 50 countries in partnership with foreign governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector companies, and local communities. These programs tackle threats to wildlife and ecosystems both through direct actions as well as information campaigns to restore habitat and protect imperiled species. They also address underlying issues that lead to the loss of biodiversity, including improved livelihoods and countering corruption. As the subcommittee is well aware, healthy, natural ecosystems not only provide clean air, potable water, and food; they also shield us from pathogens and protect against zoonotic disease spillover. The flip side of that coin is that biodiversity loss exacerbates land degradation, food insecurity and poverty, contributing to social unrest and instability. These conservation programs are critical to our National security interests, economic prosperity, global stability, and global health. *For FY26, IFAW requests continued support for Biodiversity Conservation Programs at the FY24 enacted level of at least $365.75 million.*

The GEF is an independent international financial facility made up of 183 countries, private companies, and non-governmental organizations. The GEF provides grants to address global environmental issues, including wildlife trafficking, habitat degradation, landscape preservation, and other environmental pressures. The GEF focuses on innovative projects in developing countries that provide real, tangible impact, improve sustainability, and protect our shared global environment. All projects funded by the GEF are closely monitored and evaluated for efficiency and Effectiveness. Overall, the GEF leverages more than five dollars for every one dollar invested by private partners and donor countries. The U.S. strongly influences GEF strategies and programming, and GEF projects support many U.S. security and economic priorities. *IFAW requests $150.2 million in FY26 for ongoing support of the GEF.*

Sustainable Landscapes Programs promote responsible land use, reducing deforestation, strengthening environmental resilience, protecting water, and conserving biodiversity. These programs focus on target States and regions where land deg-

radation is rampant. Sustainable landscapes programs have leveraged more than $500 million in investments and partnered with companies with more than $4 trillion in global sales since 2012 in order to reduce deforestation and forest degradation around the world. Protecting and restoring ecosystems is an important defense against zoonotic disease spillover, and we need to invest in these programs now to prevent future pandemics. *IFAW therefore requests $175.5 million to fund sustainable landscapes programs in FY26.*

The TFCRCA was first enacted in 1998 as the Tropical Forest Conservation Act and offered eligible countries the opportunity to reduce the official concessional debt they owed to the U.S. government while generating funds locally to conserve biological diversity and protect ecologically and economically vital forest ecosystems. In 2019, Congress reauthorized the act and expanded its authority to include coral reef ecosystems. This highly successful and innovative "debt-for-nature" program has produced tremendous returns on investment over the last two decades, and by supporting the long-term protection of tropical forests in developing countries, it is also contributing to efforts to address biodiversity loss, and the prevention of future pandemics due to zoonotic spillover. *For FY26, IFAW requests $15 million for the TFCRCA.*

Programs for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking are imperative in counteracting the pervasive illicit trade in live wildlife and wildlife parts and products. Sophisticated multinational criminal syndicates generate an estimated $20 billion or more annually from wildlife trafficking. In addition to the cruel and inhumane practices that accompany wildlife trafficking, evidence strongly demonstrates linkages between trafficking in wildlife and other criminal enterprises, including trafficking in arms, drugs, and even terrorist activities. Wildlife trafficking programs increase the capacity of wildlife law enforcement to detect, interdict, and seize illegal wildlife products and enhance investigative and law enforcement functions of our foreign enforcement partners. They also strengthen antipoaching efforts, disrupt transit hubs, reduce consumer demand for illegal wildlife products, and counter online wildlife crime; a highly lucrative and ever-evolving form of illicit activity. *For FY26, we request $118.75 million for Wildlife Trafficking Programs.*

U.S. FOUNDATION FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

In 2024, Congress passed a law creating the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation (USFICA). USFICA is intended to facilitate public-private partnerships in the conservation arena, requiring a $2 match by private funders for each $1 Federal investment. The goal of the foundation is to provide long-term, reliable financing for the management of protected and conserved areas, increase available resources to protect critical landscapes and seascapes in developing countries, and prevent illegal exploitation of wildlife, forests, and fisheries by criminal networks, armed groups, and other bad actors. IFAW requests $100 million for USFICA in FY26.

Thank you for the opportunity to share IFAW's priority requests to promote conservation in the FY 2026 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act. Wildlife and their habitats are our global heritage, and they are critical to human health and happiness for generations to come. We appreciate the continued support of this subcommittee for conservation efforts and would be happy to be a resource to your staff as you develop this bill. Thank you.

[This statement was submitted by Danielle Kessler, Director, U.S. Office.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

International Justice Mission (IJM) is a global organization working to protect people in poverty from violence, with a focus on human trafficking and other violent crimes. Founded in 1997, IJM has developed partnerships with local authorities in Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, South Asia and Southeast Asia to strengthen the rule of law and increase access to justice, building communities where vulnerable people are safe and protected.

IJM recommends the following priorities for the subcommittee in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations process:

I. Support the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office)

Trafficking in persons (TIP), also known as human trafficking modern slavery, is a $236 billion global criminal industry that undermines legitimate markets and harms American workers. When foreign goods are produced through forced labor, they enter U.S. supply chains at artificially low costs, undercutting American busi-

nesses that follow labor laws and ethical standards. This creates an uneven playing field, suppresses wages, and weakens U.S. industries. Moreover, trafficking networks often overlap with transnational organized crime groups that engage in cyber fraud, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities that target Americans and drain billions from the U.S. economy.

Although forms of TIP like forced labor and sex trafficking are illegal in most U.S.-partner countries, often these laws are not effectively enforced. Expecting no consequences, criminals continue to enslave and abuse the most vulnerable, spreading violence and insecurity that crosses borders and ultimately impacts American safety, economic competition, and national security.

People living in poverty are especially vulnerable to exploitation because justice systems often fail to protect them. However, when public justice systems are strengthened, perpetrators who once acted with impunity can be held accountable, creating a powerful deterrent effect that significantly decreases violence. Government officials in the United States are well-positioned to advance policies and programs that deter perpetrators of human trafficking and exploitation and protect U.S. citizens and partner countries alike.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 equipped the U.S. government to address modern slavery at home and abroad. Importantly, it established the U.S. government's key anti-slavery office, the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office). The TIP Office also produces the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, a powerful diplomatic tool highlighting countries' progress, or lack thereof, in combatting human trafficking. Together, the TIP Report, grants and diplomacy have catalyzed significant reforms, making the U.S. government a major anti-trafficking leader internationally.

With notable ROIs and relatively modest investment, this office has significantly catalyzed partner governments to address human trafficking.

For example, TIP Office funding previously supported IJM's work in the Dominican Republic (DR), where we began working in 2014. Since then, IJM, partners and trained government officials in the DR have rescued 303 children, arrested 90 suspects, and attained 55 convictions. Additionally, IJM trained over 3,500 people: nearly 1,500 public justice officials and 2,000+ community members to effectively respond to sex trafficking of children.

In 2014, an IJM-conducted prevalence study showed that 1 in 10 people in the DR exploited for commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC) was a child. Results from a 2022 endline study show that now only 1 in 45 victims is a child. The reduction is even more dramatic in public spaces where it decreased from 24% to 3.4%. In 2014, 95% of cities and towns in the DR investigated in the baseline study showed sex trafficking of children. Now, only 25% of those towns show some prevalence and it is quite low. After nearly a decade of work, IJM concluded its TIP Office-funded program to protect children from sex trafficking in the Dominican Republic in April 2023.

In FY26 appropriations, IJM encourages the subcommittee to maintain FY24/FY25 enacted funding levels for the TIP Office to deploy strategic foreign assistance and fulfill their statutory mandate, including these specific requests:

—Consider increasing the TIP Office's allocation of the enacted $111,000,000 topline TIP programmatic funding. Of that topline for TIP programming in FY24/FY25, Congress appropriated $76,000,000 for foreign assistance programming through the TIP Office.

—Support the FY24/25 enacted level of $23,092,000 under the Diplomatic Programs heading for staff and programmatic support for the TIP Office to support overseas travel, to improve collaboration with the posts and regional bureaus, and to enable the TIP Office to encourage foreign governments to comply with the minimum standards in the TVPA and implementation of the tier ranking system.

II. Expand the State Department's Bilateral Partnerships to Address Trafficking and Violence

IJM has seen firsthand the momentum that Child Protection Compacts (CPCs) can generate through our work in the Philippines and Romania. These bilateral agreements, authorized by Congress in 2013, are designed to reduce child trafficking by strengthening justice systems, implementing prevention strategies, and increasing victim protection. One example is the U.S.—Philippines CPC Partnership (2017–2021), which addressed the growing threat of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). Through this initiative, the Philippine government and its partners, including IJM, conducted 82 operations, rescued 312 children, and arrested 97 suspects. The partnership also trained hundreds of law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and

aftercare providers, and established the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC) to enhance international cooperation.

Building on the CPC model, the U.S. has launched a new bilateral initiative, the Partnership to Prevent Trafficking in Persons (P2P). In May 2024, the U.S. signed a P2P agreement with Zambia, providing $4 million in foreign assistance through the TIP Office. This funding enabled collaboration between civil society, Zambian government ministries, and the TIP Office to develop and implement a national action plan. A similar agreement was recently signed with Honduras, focusing on preventing and responding to violence against women and children by strengthening judicial systems and institutional capacity.

These types of government-to-government partnerships, often tied to foreign aid, mirror the approach used by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), where formal agreements help the U.S. leverage reforms in partner countries. By identifying policy gaps, equipping officials to identify victims, and supporting the prosecution of perpetrators, these partnerships create criminal deterrence to substantially lessen violent crimes, in turn, deterring irregular migration.

In FY24 appropriations, IJM encourages the subcommittee to sustain funding for CPCs as a proven, innovative tool for reducing child trafficking and strengthening child protection systems. We recommend funding at or above the FY24/FY25 enacted level of $12,500,000.

III. Invest in Programs that Reduce Violence Against Women & Children in Central America

The Northern Triangle countries, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, face some of the highest rates of violence against women and children (VAWC) in the world. Central American women experience staggering levels of sexual assault and violence, with an estimated 95% of crimes against women and girls going unpunished, according to a 2022 report from the George W. Bush Institute. This widespread impunity undermines the rule of law and perpetuates cycles of violence and instability.

This violence is more than an urgent moral issue: it is a threat to U.S. national security and economic growth. Strengthening public justice systems in Latin America to prevent and respond to VAWC is a critical component of broader efforts to deter irregular migration, disrupt transnational criminal networks, and stabilize the region. These efforts directly support U.S. regional security goals by weakening the influence of organized crime, reducing corruption, and restoring trust in public institutions.

IJM recommends that anti-VAWC assistance be tied to bilateral instruments, such as compacts. These formal agreements with specific government institutions ensure fiscal accountability, measurable outcomes, and long-term systems reform. International donors should also work through experienced NGOs that support local authorities by providing technical assistance, mentorship, and training to police, prosecutors, courts, and social service agencies. Through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and cooperative agreements, NGOs in the Northern Triangle have demonstrated their ability to enhance reporting, response, and restoration services in partnership with government agencies.

To advance these goals, IJM encourages the subcommittee to maintain the FY24/25 enacted level of $70,000,000 for programs to reduce violence against women and children in Central America and to include $15,000,000 for bilateral compacts with the governments of Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador. These investments will not only protect vulnerable populations but also advance U.S. interests in regional stability and migration deterrence.

[This statement was submitted by Nate King.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROGRAMS

Mr. Chairman, it is an honor to provide testimony to the Committee on behalf of more than 430,000 Kiwanis-family members in nearly 16,000 Kiwanis family clubs, with more than half located within the United States. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Kiwanis/UNICEF program to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus and in support of our work related to iodine deficiency. We are seeking the support of this Committee to recommend $2,000,000 in the fiscal year 2026 bill for maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT) and $3,500,000 for iodine deficiency. This funding would come from the Department of State's accounts related to global health.

I am the retired Executive Director of Kiwanis International and serve as a volunteer under the Executive Director Emeritus role. I have had the privilege of serving Kiwanis members in the United States and in more than 80 countries around the globe.

I have been a member of Kiwanis since 1983, and I was proud to serve as the Executive Director of Kiwanis International and the Kiwanis Children's Fund for more than 14 years, retiring last year. I have seen the success of both of these global health projects in the field, and I have been proud to report back to our members on the charitable work their donations have supported.

And, I have been proud that as an American my government has been an important partner in both of these undertakings. Kiwanis members, along with these two annual government appropriations have invested more than a quarter billion dollars, most of which was from grassroots fundraising by our members, as we have together saved untold hundreds of thousands of lives of mothers and children, and collectively raised the IQs of many demographic groups in undeveloped nations.

Kiwanis remains committed to support both of these global health initiatives and our members are passionate about this part of the work we and they do.

I believe these programs are in the National interest of the United States and consistent with policies related to U. S. humanitarian assistance.

IODINE DEFICIENCY

Iodine deficiency is the world's leading cause of preventable mental impairment. Iodine deficiency has been kept under control through a global movement to iodize edible salt. Funds provided by the United States through a public/private partnership with Kiwanis International, UNICEF, and the Iodine Global Network are preventing brain damage and other adverse outcomes for millions of children.

The U. S. appropriations for Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) funds the joint Kiwanis International/UNICEF program to provide universal salt iodization and investments in measuring, monitoring, reporting, and surveillance of iodine nutrition. This effective program is preventing iodine deficiency and its impact on cognitive development in children.

Kiwanis International has successfully invested in universal salt iodization to virtually eliminate iodine deficiency disorders for two decades. In partnership with UNICEF, and several governments, global access to iodized table salt increased from less than 20% to 88% today. Kiwanis has raised and invested more than $100 million from its members and clubs for this effort.

We ask for your support for $3.5 million in fiscal year 2026 to sustain existing iodine deficiency programs and to initiate additional programs to address the needs of the few countries that are still at risk.

Iodine, a micronutrient that naturally occurs in some foods, is an essential element for normal growth and cognitive development in humans. Iodine is not synthesized by the body and is required to be provided through the daily diet in recommended amounts. It is required for proper functioning of the thyroid gland, which in turn regulates many biochemical reactions and the proper skeletal and central nervous system development in fetuses and infants.

While many of the disorders resulting from severe iodine deficiency in dietary intake have virtually disappeared (e.g., goiter, cretinism, stunting, stillbirth), insufficient iodine during pregnancy leads to brain damage that can reduce a child's IQ by up to 8 to 10 points. Even mild-to-moderate iodine deficiency at school age can reduce IQ by 3 to 5 points, and thus, the ability for a child to learn to read.

Thanks to iodized salt, most infants and children of the world have had adequate brain development. Adequate iodine in the diet during pregnancy and until age 5 will greatly improve a child's healthy brain development and readiness to learn as he/she enters primary school grades. Adequate iodine during early life is critical to children's ability to reach their full potential.

The cost of prevention is small—$.05 a year per individual for a lifetime of protection against iodine deficiency. On average, every dollar spent on salt iodization yields a $30 return on investment through improved learning, which leads to greater productivity in later life that boosts economies of the Nations in which these children live.

MATERNAL AND NEONATAL TETANUS

For over 14 years, Kiwanis and its members have been working to eliminate the deadly disease of maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT). Kiwanis launched its global campaign *The Eliminate Project* in 2010 to help save or protect mothers and newborns from MNT. Tetanus is a preventable disease that kills one newborn child every twenty-two minutes.

The maternal and neonatal tetanus programs provide low-cost maternal and neonatal tetanus vaccines for women of childbearing age. These vaccines prevent tetanus and death in newborn children. Maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT) is a deadly disease, which is easily prevented by a series of three inexpensive vaccine doses to mothers of childbearing age, who, in turn, pass the immunity on to their children.

Participation and funding by the United States are imperative to the success of eliminating MNT. In many developing countries, childbirth is done at home without the support of a healthcare worker and without a clean, sterile blade to cut the umbilical cord. This, and other factors, can lead to tetanus poisoning in the newborn baby, causing severe spasms and an excruciatingly painful death.

It is a terrible disease in which human contact exacerbates the baby's pain. A mother's touch hurts, leaving the baby to writhe in agony for a few days until he or she dies.

MNT results when tetanus spores, which are present in soil everywhere, enter the bloodstream. It is mainly caused by a lack of access to sanitary birthing conditions, unclean instruments used to cut the umbilical cord, and unclean post-partum cord care. MNT is easily prevented by a series of vaccine doses to women of childbearing age, who pass the immunity on to their children.

Women who are properly vaccinated with the tetanus vaccine will have immunity through most of their childbearing years and their babies are protected through the first 2 months of life. We believe these mothers deserve to give birth to healthy babies, and their babies deserve to achieve their full human potential.

In partnership with UNICEF, Kiwanis committed to and has raised more than 120 million dollars to immunize women in countries where MNT is still a major health threat. More than 6,000 Kiwanis-family members and clubs in the United States alone have contributed to the fundraising campaign. We are now tackling the hardest leg of a difficult journey.

Since 2000, MNT has been eliminated in 49 of the 59 at risk countries. Between 1999 and 2024, more than 169 million women in some of the world's most remote places were vaccinated against tetanus, saving thousands of newborns from death due to tetanus every year.

SUPPORT FOR PARTNERS

We have a highly effective partnership with UNICEF and urge you to support UNICEF in its request for a U.S. fiscal year 2026 contribution. We also support United States funding for maternal and child health.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, I ask you to join us in our efforts working to eliminate MNT. Help us ensure that no baby suffers this excruciating seven-day death ever again by recommending $2,000,000 within global health accounts for the elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus. This funding will help target the last countries to be certified for the elimination of MNT and protect the lives of hundreds of thousands of children.

Funds provided through the U. S. public/private partnership with Kiwanis International, UNICEF, and the Iodine Global Network, are preventing brain damage and other adverse outcomes for millions of children. Funding at the level of $3,500,000 will provide continued funding to keep global attention to this intervention and to address the needs of the few countries that are still at risk of iodine deficiency disorders.

Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Stan Soderstrom, Executive Director Emeritus.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM WATER ALLIANCE

Dear Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and Honorable Members of the subcommittee:

We write in support of funding of not less than $451 million in fiscal year 2026 for water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WSSH) programs administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development under the Sen. Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005 (Public Law 109–121), as amended by the 2014 Water for the World Act (Public Law 113–209).

The unexamined funding freeze, termination of almost all WASH programs, and the mass firings of skilled, experienced personnel at USAID has brought the work

of some WASH organizations to a halt—not because they were entirely dependent on USAID grants or contracts (they were not), but so much of their work was closely tied to the goals and funded programs of USAID that work had to be halted. Partnerships that had been built, especially in recent years because of USAID's increase focus on private sector and local partnerships in program design and delivery, have collapsed or been seriously reduced or compromised.

Still, the 26 member organizations of the Millennium Water Alliance, most of them implementing NGOs based in the U.S., continue to implement programs where they can with other funds, although for most there is no practical route to "full replacement" of the funding, important leadership, and leveraging support—brought by USAID.

Members of the Senate may recall that we, and similar organizations, had often called for more funding for USAID to modernize its system, streamline its procurement yet maintain accountability, and make the actual achievements of this work on the ground more easily accessible for review. The agency was indeed taking steps to do this, but unfortunately, those who simply wish to undermine all foreign aid, regardless of facts or history, exploited alleged examples of unwise or confusing grants in some sectors to paint the entire agency as wasteful, or—most unfairly of all—antithetical to America's true values.

Helping poor communities to gain access to safe drinking water and sanitation, thus helping to reduce infant mortality and improve the real health of hundreds of thousands of people each year, is a real American value. That is what America's water, sanitation, and hygiene expects, working with USAID coordination and funding, have been doing in thousands of communities over the years.

WASH organizations raise money from individual Americans, from foundations and corporations, and yes, from governments and multilateral organizations around the world to do this lifesaving work. But Senators should know that public opinion polling has shown that nearly 93% of Americans, across party lines, geography, and other demographic factors, support safe drinking water as a necessary and important role for the United States government as a reflection of our character as a Nation as well as being in our own best political, economic, and security interests.

If Congress acts to restore funding for the enormously popular and effective programs for safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene in the poorest communities in high priority countries (there were 21 designated by USAID as of FY 25), much of this bipartisan-supported work can continue.

The U.S. Government's Global Water Strategy can still provide guidance on the administration of this funding for maximum results possible with the amounts appropriated. A strong investment in WSSH helps to safeguard U.S. strategic interests. Improved WSSH can help prevent pandemic disease and build resilient health care systems.

This subcommittee has been essential to the progress made since passage of the 2005 Water for the Poor Act. On behalf of our Millennium Water Alliance implementing and donor partners that work in more than 90 countries around the world to alleviate poverty, build democracy, and represent the best of America to hundreds of thousands of grateful people, we thank you.

The Millennium Water Alliance

Acacia Water | CARE Catholic Relief Services
Center for Affordable Water & Sanitation Technology | Chemonics
Desert Research Institute | Eastern Congo Initiative | Engineers Without Borders
Evidence Action | Food for the Hungry | Global Water Center
HELVETAS | IRC WASH | LifeStraw International
Living Water International | Mortenson Center-University of Colorado Boulder
PATH | RTI International | Save the Children | Splash Vita Impact
WaterAid America | The Water Project | Water Mission
World Resources Institute | World Vision

[This statement was submitted by John D. Sparks, Director of Advocacy & Communications.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NACEL OPEN DOOR

RE: FY26 FUNDING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

International student exchange programs are one of the most cost-effective and worthwhile investments in the safety, security, and prosperity of the United States. Funding of these programs will continue to provide an incredible return on investment for the U.S. government and its taxpayers.

When students, of any age—but especially high school and college age—are given the opportunity to travel to another country; learn the language in an immersion setting; understand from first-hand experience the culture, history, education system, economy, and government; create connections with people who have different opinions and perspectives; and forge lifelong relationships with people who become dear friends and second families, the future can be a more peaceful and prosperous one for all!

Whether international students travel to the United States (bringing thousands of dollars into local and national economies!), or U.S. students travel to other countries, connections are made, understanding grows, and the ability to navigate differences and build bridges becomes second nature. Multiply this across multiple households, in multiple communities, in multiple States, in multiple countries each year, and you have a viable recipe for world peace!

In order to ensure America can continue to succeed and in fact excel in our global environment and economy, we must understand the global competition. Through participation in funded exchange programs, students (who might otherwise not have the resources to even leave their hometown, let alone their state or country) are able to observe, experience, and learn first-hand about education, technology, scientific and medical innovation, and much more. They bring this knowledge and their skills back to the U.S. and contribute to a more competent and competitive U.S. participation in the global market.

Through State Department-funded exchange programs like CBYX, American students learn through direct experiences in other countries. They learn about other countries' economies by shopping for groceries with their host families. Equally, they learn about government and history during conversations at the dinner table, and they learn about other countries' education systems while attending school alongside local students. They learn to listen, speak, read, and write in another language, mastering the inherent nuance of culture that can only be achieved through immersion environments. Our CBYX Vocational participants specifically learn about the German dual-education system and the robust, centuries' old model of apprenticeship—a strategy that can and will continue to help rebuild America's workforce development as more and more companies utilize apprenticeships to create their own pipeline of specially trained and certified workers, across numerous sectors: modern manufacturing, medicine & medical tech, hospitality, and business, to name just a few. And the familial relationships which our CBYX participants maintain with their host families and friends cannot be understated. When you share close friendships with people from other countries, the world map is not just outlines of country borders; each country contains the faces of your friends.—That is how we nurture diplomacy and true peace!

When we learn about problems in other countries, we better understand the problems in our own country. Better yet, when we see and understand various solutions to those problems, we all benefit. And the best solution to any problem it to address the source and prevent the problem altogether... that is what international student exchange can do for the U.S. and for our world. The investment in international student exchange programs—which grow our friendships and diplomatic alliances around the world—is fraction of the amount needed to defend ourselves from foreign and domestic enemies. The choice and decision should be a simple one; an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure—especially when the cure likely equates to destruction and devastation, requiring even more resources and funding. Please continue to fund international student exchange programs!

The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange was created in 1983. In the past 40+ years, it has very successfully achieved its goal of strengthening the transatlantic relationship between the United States and Germany. The CBYX Alumni Association (CBYXalumni.org) is a testament to the great impact the program has made on American participants, and the fantastic contributions they are in turn making within their families, local communities, States, and our country. The CBYX program is unique in its JOINT funding by two strong democratic countries: the United States and Germany. HERZLICHEN DANK//HEARTFELT THANKS for the past funding of the CBYX program!

For the United States to withdraw its funding for this longstanding, successful partnership with Germany would be an embarrassment and insult to the great cooperation which the program has created.

PLEASE CONTINUE FUNDING THE CBYX PROGRAM. Please approve the funding which was already appropriated for FY26!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Carrie Hess, Program Director.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS

Thank you, Chairman Lindsey Graham, Ranking Member Brian Schatz, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee for the opportunity for the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to provide testimony regarding the importance of the rule of law and the critical role of courts and other justice sector institutions in protecting U.S. national interests. By ensuring enforcement and compliance with drug laws, immigration laws, anti-corruption and the criminal code, countries more effectively detect, deter, and prosecute terrorist groups and criminal organizations that threaten U.S. security and economic interests by combating transnational crimes. I urge this subcommittee—in its FY26 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill—to protect funding for the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

NCSC was founded more than 50 years ago by leaders of the U.S. courts to support and lead State courts and courts around the world to improve the administration of justice services and meet the evolving challenges of the times. We do this by providing evidence-based research, identifying and promoting best practices and programs, providing consulting services to courts and justice system partners, and enhancing the professionalism of courts through education programs. NCSC works at the center of our justice system, helping State courts in this country that handle 97% of all cases filed in the U.S., including cases presenting important Federal claims. NCSC supports U.S. international development and security interests by promoting the rule of law and democracy in partnership with the Department of State. We have adjusted to program challenges on a country-by-country basis, utilizing innovative technology solutions that help courts, prosecutor offices, law schools, and other justice institutions carry out their mandates and improve institutional performance. Over the last 30 years, NCSC has implemented more than 100 rule-of law programs—many in partnership with the Department of State and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Such programs are critical to building and sustaining democracy abroad; protecting vital U.S. national interests; countering authoritarianism and disinformation; fighting corruption, organized crime and terrorism; and promoting human rights. NCSC and our justice partners in developing countries bear witness to the impact U.S. funded rule of law programs have had abroad in strengthening justice systems and developing local professional capacity to sustain the reform process.

As you work on appropriations for FY26, we wish to express support for funding for INL, which arms countries with the tools to combat terrorist groups and criminal organizations that threaten U.S. security and economic interests by combating transnational crimes such as financing of terrorism, money laundering, and weapons trafficking. As a result of this support, these threats to U.S. national security and prosperity are significantly reduced. Initiatives are implemented to assist countries in detecting, disrupting, and preventing illicit proceeds from being used transnationally to fund terrorist groups, gangs, and organized crime syndicates. NCSC has partnered with INL in countries in the Middle East/North Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean to implement a range of programs that strengthen the rule of law, counter corruption and organized crime, educate the public on access to justice, promote legal education reform, invest in drug court-building and infrastructure, support law enforcement, and execute training programs for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and legal educators. Establishing and effectively strengthening justice institutions are critical to upholding the rule of law, safeguarding democracy globally, and protecting U.S. national economic and security interests. Funding for INL will sustain democratic reform (security through justice) across the globe and further United States' strategic interests.

NCSC acknowledges the difficult task before you in making what are clearly important decisions regarding budget priorities. A key question is this: What will the U.S. gain from funding rule of law programs abroad?

Simply put, countries that have stable justice systems can become reliable democracies, averting global conflicts and instability. Such conflicts and instability often require costly American military interventions. Investments in rule of law programs

help counter state-sponsored terrorism, build regional security, check government corruption, and reduce refugee migrations that affect American borders. Now more than ever it is important to strengthen judicial institutions abroad to act as a bulwark against authoritarianism and arbitrary rule. In the absence of a functioning justice system, the public will lose trust in governing institutions and, worse, illegitimate regimes will come to power contrary to the will of the people and democratic principles.

Today, democratic institutions and the rule of law are in retreat in parts of the world. The challenges facing institutions of democratic governance threaten the peace and prosperity of the U.S. and of our allies. As disinformation grows, the legitimacy of elections will be questioned, threatening the very foundation of democracy. Barriers to access to justice diminish trust in institutions. Corruption is a key source of financing for criminal and terrorist organizations that know no borders, posing grave threats to developing and developed countries alike. Government integrity and accountability programs are critical to preventing, detecting, and punishing corruption. Nevertheless, support for judicial independence, ethics, integrity, and accountability risks being lost in the sea of priorities and objectives.

We are grateful to play a role in several Department of State initiatives that protect the rule of law globally. NCSC's recent and current work made possible through this Federal support includes:

Counter-Narcotics and Counter-Money Laundering

—*Caribbean.*—The Caribbean Anti-Crime program assists 13 countries in the Caribbean Basin to detect, disrupt, and prevent illicit proceeds from being used transnationally to fund terrorist groups, gangs, and organized crime syndicates. Targeted initiatives strengthen criminal justice sector institutions, including police, prosecutors, and courts, to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate matters that reduce crime and violence associated with gangs, transnational crimes (trafficking of drugs, weapons and people smuggling into the U.S.) and financial crimes. These initiatives enhance the capacity to identify, trace, and recover criminal assets and disrupt cross-border criminal modalities including cartels, gangs, illicit finance and criminal organizations. The recovery of criminal proceeds, which are being reinvested into Caribbean law enforcement and justice agencies, ultimately, over time, reduces Caribbean reliance on U.S. aid.

—*Mexico.*—The Mexico Travel and Logistics Program for Training Support provides prompt and efficient programmatic, logistical, travel, and administrative support to INL Mexico. Program activities include urgent support to DEA and FBI sponsored counternarcotics special investigations and operations across Mexico aiming to disrupt transnational crimes and other cartel operations. The program directly contributes to (1) combating narcotics and drug cartel operations, including by materially securing increased DEA presence in Mexico; (2) raising conviction rates of violent criminals; (3) dismantling human trafficking networks through training of judges and police forces; and (4) maintaining open communication lines with Mexican judicial and security forces countering narcotrafficking (including fentanyl production), organized crime, and illegal immigration. Support for the FBI's Counternarcotics Special Investigations program and DEA's Special Investigations Unit have demonstrated significant impact, conducting 206 activities with 955 participants which have played a crucial role in disrupting drug trafficking and dismantling criminal organizations.

Counter-Terrorism

—*Bangladesh.*—Department of State resources helped support the implementation of Countering Terrorism through a Strengthened Rule of Law Framework Program to increase the capacity of courts in Bangladesh to adjudicate terrorism, terrorism financing, and money laundering cases. The Program has worked with justice sector stakeholders to create a unified judicial practice by increasing awareness, training judges, improving efficiency and case processing, and creating judicial resources focused on counterterrorism and complex financial crimes.

—*Nigeria.*—The Building Capacity for Nigerian Judicial Sector to Prosecute Terrorism and Atrocity Cases program contributes to the INL objectives of assisting the Government of Nigeria and regional countries in responding to evolving terrorism threats by strengthening the criminal justice system. The program builds the capacity of the complex case group, Federal high court, and financial crime task force to prosecute and adjudicate terrorism and terrorism financing cases. Program initiatives support the prosecution and the courts to adjudicate war crimes and kidnapping involving ISIS West Africa and Boko Haram.

Rule of Law

—*Costa Rica.*—The Program to Strengthen Capacity to Detect Fraud, Prevent Corruption, and Implement an Effective Ethics Framework in Costa Rica's Judiciary supported the judicial branch by building the capacity of justice sector beneficiaries to improve outcomes in the identification, prevention, monitoring, and control of judicial corruption and fraud.

—*Nicaragua.*—The Program to Strengthen Rule of Law in Nicaragua was a 3-year program focused on promoting rule of law principles among important sectors of Nicaraguan society. The program advanced local solutions to bring awareness of rule of law values around the country, engaged community networks, and provided useful communications and academic tools that can be used to apply rule of law principles as mechanisms to combat corruption and enhance the resilience of communities affected by crime, violence, and instability.

The rule of law programs that NCSC implements abroad touch all branches of government and engage numerous government and societal actors, who are trying to build stable civil societies rooted in law. Foreign judicial officials have repeatedly expressed a need for judicial governance and leadership training to help them formulate justice system strategies and implement reforms that improve justice administration, performance, and accountability. In the absence of rule of law, government is unaccountable to the people and inevitably becomes corrupt and unjust—an outcome that the U.S.-funded rule of law projects help to avert every year in all regions of the world. This impact cannot be underestimated in a time when authoritarianism is on the rise and disinformation in social media and news outlets can quickly move through societies.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of NCSC, I urge that this subcommittee in its FY26 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill continue to protect funding for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) to promote the rule of law as an essential tool to achieve our foreign policy objectives. Continued investment in the rule of law is vital to U.S. national security interests and our economic interests. Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Elizabeth T. Clement, President.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and subcommittee Members, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about the critical role that America's democracy assistance plays in advancing U.S. national security while manifesting Americans' most cherished values.

I am Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes, the President of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and I urge you to fully support international democracy programs, especially the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which is funded at $315 million in current law.

The values of freedom and democracy that guided our Founders are some of the most powerful ideas in human history. Our freedom and democracy have made America the most powerful nation on earth. Our support for the freedom of others builds a safe and more prosperous world for Americans, and for everyone.

For more than forty years, NDI and our fellow NED family members have toiled in some of the most difficult places, alongside brave leaders and activists seeking to secure their own freedom and democracy. NDI's programs level the playing field for American businesses, reduce conflict, and advance peace and security. Most of all, NDI unleashes the power of people to make their own governments work for them. It is the very essence of sovereignty and self-determination. We partner with those who do the work of democracy, in community groups, political parties, parliaments, and public officials.

Where we succeed at strengthening freedom, people live longer and economies grow faster. Where we succeed at helping people forge peaceful politics rooted in dialogue and pluralism, terrorists find it harder to recruit, and countries are less likely to collapse in conflict. Where we work to overturn corruption and shine sunlight on government operations, we open up new opportunities for businesses to grow, trade, and invest.

Where freedom works, we see less mass migration, less violence, and fewer threats facing the American military from extremists and adversaries.

We know that freedom works. That's why we have seen in every corner of the world: when people have the choice, they choose democracy. We want every human being to have that choice.

The following are just a few examples of NDI's work to help people secure their own rights and make their governments work for them.

For many years, we have supported brave advocates for freedom from Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Hong Kong, North Korea, Tibet, Burma and Cambodia as they stood up to brutal dictatorships in their countries. Last year, in Venezuela, a unified, organized opposition movement was able to monitor the polls and report the results despite Maduro's coercion. They proved to the world that Nicolas Maduro lost that election and that Edmundo Gonzalez is the legitimately elected president of Venezuela.

In Syrian territories formerly held by ISIS, NDI has worked hand in hand with the International Republican Institute to bring citizens and local governments together and create a bulwark against any future ISIS resurgence. We work with mothers freed from lives under ISIS control to ensure that their children are never recruited to terrorism.

At a time when Iran and Hezbollah have been put on the back foot by Israel's war in Gaza, highlighting the regime's diversion of funds to opaque security and defense channels that reward the IRGC, fund regional instability, and support terrorism is more important now than ever.

NDI opened our office in Ukraine almost immediately after Ukraine became an independent state. NDI has played a central role in building and sustaining free and open politics in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and across the Balkans—frontline States in the fight against Russia's brutal coercion and corruption, which is now aided by China, North Korea and Iran.

NDI has played a central role in promoting democracy across the African continent since the election of Nelson Mandela. We have stabilized fragile democracies, pushed back against violent extremists, helped expose debt trap deals with China, and leveled the playing field for U.S. businesses.

Unfortunately, all but 2 of the 97 NDI programs funded by USAID and the State Department have now been terminated, including the ones I just highlighted. As a result, NDI has been forced to withdraw from our work in dozens of countries around the world, and to let go of eighty percent of our extraordinarily committed, experienced, and talented staff.

As painful as this has been, the impact on our partners has been far worse. In so many sensitive countries, brave freedom fighters and democracy defenders have been abandoned in the fight against the brutal regimes of America's biggest adversaries. The only people celebrating this rollback in American national security are the dictators in Beijing, Tehran, Havana, Managua, Moscow and Caracas.

America's national security, economic strength and global leadership are best secured in a world where freedom prevails. The United States is facing off against corrupt, violent dictatorships who are undermining democracies around the world, for the sake of their own power and influence, at our expense. NDI's work is a strategic investment that benefits Americans and reflects their values.

I served previously as the State Department's director of foreign assistance. I know just how much pressure is on these accounts, and how important it is to ensure that foreign assistance delivers results for the American people. I have complete confidence that the work of our NED family meets that mark. Dollar for dollar, you cannot find a better deal for the American taxpayer.

I know how much this committee cares about democracy work, and I thank you for your steadfast support.

I urge you to continue to support and strengthen the National Endowment for Democracy and the core institutes. Please sustain the current levels of funding for NED, and please restore the critically important tool of American purpose and power represented by democracy assistance.

Thank you for your continued support for freedom worldwide.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Dear Chair Graham and Ranking Member Schatz:

Thank you for the opportunity to share recommendations for fiscal year 2026 appropriations. The Nature Conservancy is a global nonprofit conservation organization whose mission is to conserve the lands and waters upon which all life depends. Our planet faces the interconnected threats of rapid climate change and biodiversity loss. We have years, not decades, to address these existential perils. Grounded by decades of local on-the-ground experience, TNC is maximizing our ability to affect change by bringing together real-world solutions, policy expertise, sustainable financing and collaborative partnerships across the globe and in all 50 U.S. States.

TNC is grateful to this subcommittee for its longstanding commitment and investment in prioritizing conservation in U.S. foreign policy and assistance.

Six years ago, a seminal study reported that one million plant and animal species were on the verge of extinction. Between 1980 and 2000, nearly 250 million acres of tropical forest were destroyed. During the same time period, 23% of the Earth's land surface was degraded, reducing the productivity of farmland and other ecosystems. In the last 150 years, live coral cover on reefs has been cut in half. By 2035, reefs as an ecosystem may be functionally extinct. The loss of nature is undermining food and water security and human health. With a doubling of the human population since 1970, and a fourfold increase in the global economy and a tenfold increase in global trade, our planet faces a crossroads. Threats to the natural world are destabilizing communities and countries, requiring innovative investments in solutions that benefit both nature and regional security. Investing in conservation supports U.S. national security and strategic interests around the world. Leading national security experts agree that global ecological disruptions threaten U.S. national security and must be prioritized in policymaking, as evidenced in The Security Threat that Binds Us, a report developed by the Council on Strategic Risks.

Leadership on biodiversity conservation has been a hallmark of U.S. foreign policy for decades. Foreign assistance directed to biodiversity programs has long made a meaningful difference in addressing the planetary crises we currently face and helping close the global financing gap needed to address these crises. As noted in the report above, such assistance directly serves the United States' national security and economic interests.

These investments have historically been supported by strong, bipartisan congressional champions and administrations from both parties. However, recent changes to the U.S. foreign assistance architecture have raised concerns about the continuation of priority conservation programs. As these developments unfold, we believe conservation programs merit continued support due to their proven track record of advancing America's strategic interests while delivering strong returns on investment for U.S. taxpayers.

TNC appreciates the leadership of this subcommittee to finance and sustain conservation investments globally. The following accounts strategically position the United States to continue investing in and partnering with leading on-the-ground conservation efforts internationally. America can advance its foreign policy goals through these foreign aid accounts and policy instruments at the departments of State and the Treasury, as well as through investments in global natural resource agencies and contributions to multilateral financial and environmental institutions. These agencies and institutions include the U.S. Forest Service (International Program), U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (International Programs, Wildlife Trafficking, Multinational Species Conservation Funds, and Wildlife Without Borders programs) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (International Program).

We applaud the passage of the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act last Congress, which underscores the urgency of investing in nature. TNC urges the subcommittee to work closely with U.S. leadership and ensure strong investments through targeted foreign assistance in FY26.

Biodiversity Conservation Programs.—Most U.S. foreign assistance for on-the-ground conservation is delivered through the Department of State and its robust portfolio of conservation programs. A strong investment in these programs will help protect some of the largest, most at-risk natural landscapes and the livelihoods of millions of people who directly depend on natural resources for their survival and economic growth. By maintaining and restoring the natural resources that supply fertile soil, clean water, food, and medicines, these biodiversity programs enhance U.S. economic and national security interests, reducing conflict over resource scarcity and improving the stability of trading partners. TNC requests the Biodiversity Conservation Programs be funded at $365.75 million in FY26, with specific safeguards to ensure these funds remain dedicated to their intended conservation purposes.

Sustainable Landscapes Program.—This program focuses on countries where globally important forests are threatened and where degradation of wetlands, peatlands and agricultural land impairs development and drives emissions. TNC also supports an additional investment for the Amazon Fund and related efforts to curb deforestation and advance deforestation-free supply chains that also further American business interests. TNC requests $175.75 million in FY26 for the program.

U.S. Contribution to the Global Environment Facility.—The United States' support for the GEF is essential to its efforts to build a safer, cleaner and healthier world, with direct benefits for American jobs and prosperity. Every dollar the U.S. invests in the GEF generates another $40 from other countries and partners. This

has helped the GEF deliver over 5,000 projects in more than 170 countries, several of which are key U.S. allies. The GEF is lean and effective, with only 2% of resources being spent on expenses at its headquarters. Over its 32-year history, GEF has invested $23 billion in direct conservation and generated an additional $129 billion in co-financing. TNC has been an implementing partner of the GEF in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, and we appreciate the critical difference the GEF is making to address the crisis of biodiversity loss. TNC requests the GEF be funded at $150.2 million in FY26 to contribute towards the annual installment of the U.S. contribution to the ninth GEF replenishment.

Combating Wildlife Trafficking.—Wildlife trafficking has evolved into the fourth-largest illegal trade globally, with the market for illegal wildlife products generating up to $23 billion annually. It threatens U.S. national security by financing criminal syndicates and extremist groups globally. Combating Wildlife Trafficking programs support efforts to strengthen wildlife law enforcement, combat poaching, disrupt trafficking rings, and reduce demand for illegal wildlife products across the globe. TNC requests that Congress fund Combating Wildlife Trafficking at $118.75 million in FY26, with $47.5 million of that total allocated to the Bureau of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement.

U.S. Foundation for International Conservation.—Tropical forests are in retreat; coastal wetlands are deteriorating worldwide; and scientists predict that over one million species are at risk for extinction within the next few decades. These growing threats not only jeopardize our planet's future but also threaten people's livelihoods and safety. The U.S. Foundation for International Conservation will provide consistent, sustainable funding for protected areas globally, ensuring the long-term protection of critical landscapes and habitats in some of the world's most vulnerable regions. Every dollar that the U.S. government invests in this program has been pledged to be matched at a 2:1 rate by the private sector, meaning that this appropriation will leverage an additional $200 million in conservation funding annually. This investment will assist in developing a multi-year model to provide ongoing and sustainable support for global conservation projects. TNC requests Congress to fund the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation at $100 million in FY26.

U.S. International Development Finance Corporation.—The DFC is advancing U.S. foreign policy interests by mobilizing private sector capital to help communities most in need. Thanks to the BUILD Act of 2018, the DFC is able to focus on key drivers of biodiversity loss and climate change such as infrastructure, habitat fragmentation and natural resources extraction. Through our Nature Bonds program, TNC is helping countries refinance their debt and generate new funding to invest in conservation and in climate mitigation and adaptation measures. Across the deals completed in the Seychelles, Belize, Barbados and Gabon, we have engaged with governments, financial institutions, NGO partners and community stakeholders to ensure that the project outcomes are a win for both conservation and sound fiscal management. We look forward to more opportunities to partner with the DFC and urge Congress to reauthorize the agency. TNC supports a request of $1,008 million in FY26—$245 million for administrative expenses and $763.4 million in program funds—to be flexibly allocated among credit subsidy, equity, technical assistance and other programmatic activities.

Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act.—This year marks the 26th anniversary of this debt-for-nature swap program, a highly effective fiscal tool that has helped shape American foreign policy and global commitment to the environment. The TFCCA has brought to life the simple but innovative idea of converting sovereign debt owed to the United States into in-country environmental conservation investments. This has greatly benefited local livelihoods and globally important biodiversity zones, all while bolstering cooperation and relationships with key U.S. allies. TNC requests $15 million in FY26 for TFCCA.

Science, Finance, and International Cooperation.—Two United Nations conventions—the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change—have received implementation funding from the U.S. government. Since its creation in 1988, the IPCC has received broad bipartisan support for providing high-integrity science on climate change. Similarly, the UNFCCC has been the primary space for policymakers to mount an international effort to tackle these risks. Continued funding of a modest budget line will signal that America continues to place importance on climate science and wants a place at the table in ongoing and future negotiations.

U.S. Contribution to the Green Climate Fund.—The GCF is a multilateral fund established in 2010 to help the world's most vulnerable countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and enhance capacity to respond to climate change by working with a wide range of partners, including more than 200 private and public sector and national and international organizations. Through this approach, GCF de-risks

investments by attracting private-sector financing and mobilizing financing at scale. As a member of the GCF Board, the United States can demonstrate its leadership on the global stage. TNC is among the newer accredited entities of the GCF, and we look forward to greater collaboration and project implementation. TNC urges Congress to enable the U.S. government to demonstrate its leadership by supporting continued investment in the GCF.

In conclusion, we are working to connect efforts to protect nature and limit climate change globally. We need to rethink economic systems so that they value nature. We must produce food in ways that restore nature. We need to recognize the leadership of Indigenous peoples and local communities worldwide. Strengthening existing global biodiversity and climate change commitments in the face of crises affecting nature and people must remain a core component of U.S. foreign policy and aid. We urge this subcommittee to maintain the United States' longstanding bipartisan commitment to global conservation by safeguarding critical funding for these programs, which directly support U.S. strategic interests abroad while addressing urgent planetary challenges. TNC sincerely appreciates the leadership of this subcommittee and urges it to continue investing in our shared priorities through conservation foreign assistance programs, particularly at this critical moment.

Thank you for the opportunity to share TNC's recommendations for the FY26 National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill.

[This statement was submitted by Tom Cors, Senior Director of Federal Affairs.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION

Mr. Chairman, and Honorable Members of the Committee, I am Ron Allen, Tribal Commissioner and Chair for the U.S. Section Budget Committee of the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC). The U.S. Section prepares an annual budget for implementation of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. Funding comes from the Departments of State, Commerce, and Interior. The integrated budget details program needs and costs for Tribal, Federal, and State agencies involved in the Treaty.

> Department of State funding in support of implementing the Pacific Salmon Treaty is part of the International Fisheries Commissions line item. The FY 2023 funding level was $5,600,000. The U.S. Section recommends a funding level of $5,700,000 for FY 2026, which is a $100,000 increase from the FY 2023 funding level. These costs provide essential support to implement the revised chapters of the annex to the Treaty. The increased funding will provide resources needed to negotiate revisions the Annex Chapters to the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

The Department of State provides funding for the dues to operate the bilateral Pacific Salmon Commission Secretariat office in Vancouver, British Columbia. The United States and Canada kept the dues constant for 12 years. The U.S. Section and the Canadian Section recognized that an annual increase in dues is needed to maintain operations over the next 10 years. The U.S. Section requested funding level maintains Secretariat operations. Canada is expected to match the increase in dues to run the Secretariat. The Commission's Finance & Administration Committee works closely with the Secretariat staff to keep costs in check. The Secretariat faced challenges in recent years to ensure the operation of test fisheries necessary for the management of Fraser River sockeye and pink fisheries as outlined in Annex Chapter 4 of the Treaty. Declines in the return of Fraser River sockeye and changes in the Canadian Use of Fish Policy have impacted the viability of the test fisheries. The current provisions of the Annex Chapters expire at the end of 2028, and it will be necessary to have additional US Section meetings and bilateral meetings to develop appropriate revisions.

The Secretariat faces challenges regarding funding for the pension liability as the Secretariat staff ages and retires. Our section urges the Department of State to continue covering this liability outside the dues structure, consistent with other International Fishery Commissions.

The Department of State provides funding, through an inter-agency agreement, with Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service, to support United States participation in the annual meeting process and to support staffing of the U.S. Section office. A hallmark of the PSC process is the input from affected fishing interests from Alaska to Washington, Oregon, and Idaho regarding the values and U.S. competitiveness in the U.S. marketplace. Maintaining the funding at current levels is essential to address these challenges.

Funding to support activities under the Pacific Salmon Commission comes from the Departments of Interior, State, and Commerce. The U.S. Section can provide an

additional budget summary and details to the Committee as required. Adequate funding from all three Departments is necessary for the United States to meet its Treaty obligations. The funds are needed for critical data collection and research activities related to the implementation of the Treaty and are used in cooperative programs between Federal, State, and Tribal fishery agencies and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada. The commitment of the United States is matched by the commitment of the Government of Canada.

Mr. Chairman, the United States and Canada established the Pacific Salmon Commission, under the Pacific Salmon Treaty of 1985, to conserve salmon stocks, provide for optimum production of salmon, and to control salmon interceptions. After more than thirty years, the work of the Pacific Salmon Commission continues to be essential for the wise management of salmon in the Pacific Northwest, British Columbia, and Alaska. For example, upriver bright fall Chinook salmon from the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River are caught in large numbers in Alaskan and Canadian waters. Tribal and non-Tribal fishermen harvest sockeye salmon from Canada's Fraser River in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and in Puget Sound. Canadian trollers off the west coast of Vancouver Island catch Washington coastal and Puget Sound Chinook and Coho salmon. In the Northern Boundary area between Canada and Alaska, fish from both countries are intercepted by the other country.

The Commission provides a public forum to ensure cooperative management of salmon populations. The United States and Canada successfully concluded lengthy negotiations to improve management, building on and adjusting the coastwide abundance-based management regime for Chinook salmon established in the 1999 agreement. The revised Coho Chapter continues to build on a framework for abundance-based management. The revised Annex Chapters for Chinook, Coho, Chum, Transboundary and Northern Boundary fisheries will be in force for the next 10 years. The United States and Canada completed a revised Fraser River Sockeye and Pink salmon chapter in 2020, which will also be in force through 2028. The U.S. and Canada are beginning negotiations for revised Annex Chapters. The negotiations will require additional resources in future years for the parties to participate in the negotiation process. The U.S. Section will provide cost estimates as the process unfolds.

Before the Treaty in 1985, fish wars often erupted with one or both countries overharvesting fish that were returning to the other country, to the detriment of resource sustainability. At the time the Treaty was signed, Chinook salmon were in a severely depressed state because of overharvest in the ocean as well as environmental degradation in the spawning rivers.

Under the Treaty, both countries committed to rebuilding the depressed runs of Chinook stocks, and they recommitted to that goal in 1999 when adopting a coastwide abundance-based approach to harvest management. Under this approach, harvest management will complement habitat conservation and restoration activities being undertaken by the States, Tribes, and other stakeholders in the Pacific Northwest to address the needs of salmon listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act. The 2018 Chinook Chapter continues these commitments. The revisions to the Chinook Chapter will continue to build on the progress made in previous agreements. The combination of these efforts is integral to achieving success in rebuilding and restoring healthy, sustainable salmon populations.

Finally, I ask you to consider the fact that the value of the commercial harvest of salmon subject to the Treaty, managed at productive levels under the Treaty, supports the infrastructure of many coastal and inland communities. The value of the commercial and recreational fisheries, and the economic diversity they provide for local economies throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, is immense. The Commission recently funded an economic study of fisheries that has determined this resource creates thousands of jobs and is a multi-billion-dollar industry. The value of these fish to the twenty-four treaty Tribes in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho goes far beyond their monetary value, to the cultural and religious lives of Indian people. A significant monetary investment is focused on salmon due to the listings of Pacific Northwest salmon populations under the Endangered Species Act. Given these resources, we can continue to utilize the Pacific Salmon Commission to develop recommendations that help with the development and implementation of solutions for minimizing impacts on listed stocks. We continue to work toward the true intent of the Treaty, and with your support, we will manage this shared resource for mutual enhancements and benefits.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my written testimony submitted for consideration by your committee. I want to thank the Committee for the support that it has given the U.S. Section in the past. Please feel free to contact me, or other members of the U.S. Section to answer any questions you or other Committee members may have regarding the U.S. Section of the Pacific Salmon Commission budget.

Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAI

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record on the importance of international family planning and reproductive health.

Support for international family planning and reproductive health has historically been a point of bipartisan agreement—anchored in shared values of human dignity, smart investment, and global stability. From the earliest days of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act in 1961 through to recent decades, lawmakers from both parties have understood that empowering women and couples to make voluntary and informed decisions about their reproductive lives leads to healthier societies and more stable communities. Republican and Democratic administrations alike have supported these programs—not only because they save lives, but because they reflect the best of American leadership and moral responsibility.

In fact, key policy and funding advances—including the establishment of USAID's Office of Population, early U.S. leadership at UNFPA, and the forging of public-private partnerships to expand contraceptive access—were often driven by bipartisan coalitions committed to evidence—based policymaking and effective development. This legacy is worth upholding. When we invest in international family planning, we are not just protecting lives-we are preserving a tradition of principled, pragmatic leadership that has long defined the United States' role on the world stage.

I want to emphasize that family planning and reproductive health are lifesaving activities that must been included in fiscal year 2026 (FY26) appropriations. Not only do these investments save lives, they also align to the values and priorities of the majority of American people who desire that reproductive freedom be respected.[1] In addition, failing to invest in reproductive health and family planning is a poor use of U.S. taxpayer dollars. For every $1 spent on family planning, between $4 to $8 are gained in returns to health systems and communities.[2,3]

Specifically, I write to recommend that in FY26 appropriations, you: (1) preserve statutory language and funding for bilateral and multilateral FP/RH; (2) permanently repeal the deadly Mexico City Policy, or Global Gag Rule, that infringes on the rights of individuals and organizations abroad, and; (3) reinstate funding for UNFPA and modify the Kemp-Kasten determination to accurately reflect the status of the agency's operations and prevent reproductive coercion in all forms.

For sixty years—nearly as long as the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act has been guiding foreign aid[4]—PAI has been motivated by one powerful truth: when women and girls are able to engage in their communities, access quality education and safe economic opportunities, and choose if, when, and how many children to have they can transform whole societies. This belief is reaffirmed through our work with thousands of advocates around the world who work at the local and national level to address the needs in their communities and advance health and human rights in their own countries.

For decades, the United States has led the world in life-saving development and humanitarian aid, saving millions of lives and improving the conditions for countless individuals in low- and middle-income countries. Our foreign aid work is a key reason for the 40% reduction in maternal mortality between 2000–2023[5] and a 39% decrease in new HIV infections from 2010–2023[6]. Our work has also contributed to a stunning 59% decrease in the global mortality rate of children under the age of five.[7]

Without sustained investments, however, the number of women and children who die of preventable causes will increase. In fact, estimates show that proposed cuts to PEPFAR will make nearly three million children orphans,[8] which will have tre-

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[1] Pew Research Center. (2025, June 12). *Public opinion on abortion.* Pew Research Center. Accessed online at: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/fact-sheet/public-opinion-on-abortion/.

[2] Starbird E, Norton M, Marcus R. Investing in Family Planning: Key to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Glob Health Sci Pract. 2016 Jun 27;4(2):191–210. doi: 10.9745/GHSP–D–15–00374. PMID: 27353614; PMCID: PMC4982245.

[3] United Nations Population Fund (2022). Investing in three transformative results: Realizing powerful returns, New York.

[4] Public Law 87–195, 75 Stat. 424 (1961).

[5] World Health Organization. Trends in maternal mortality estimates 2000 to 2023: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and UNDESA/Population Division. Geneva. 2025.

[6] World Health Organization. Epidemiological fact sheet: HIV statistics, globally and by WHO region (2023).

[7] World Health Organization. Child mortality under 5 years. Geneva. 2022. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-mortality-under-5-years.

[8] Cluver, Lucie et al. Protecting Africa's children from extreme risk: a runway of sustainability for PEPFAR programs The Lancet, Volume 405, Issue 10490, 1700–1712, 2025.

mendous impacts on the health and stability of communities and nations, as well as those individual children. Due to cuts to family planning, an estimated 287,000 women die each year from pregnancy and childbirth.

While reforms are always possible, the FY26 budget proposal and recent rescissions package do not represent thoughtful improvements, but rather a sweeping rollback of effective, life-affirming programs and a dangerous erosion of American leadership. Congress must reassert its constitutional authority to ensure that appropriated funds for international family planning and reproductive health are fully and swiftly obligated, preserving the impact and integrity of U.S. foreign assistance.

Access to comprehensive reproductive health care—including a full range of contraceptive options and accurate, evidence-based information—is foundational to improving maternal and child health, preventing unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions, reducing HIV transmission, advancing gender equality, and fostering more stable and resilient communities. These needs are even more acute in the face of escalating humanitarian crises in places like Afghanistan, Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, and Yemen, where uninterrupted access to sexual and reproductive health services, including care for survivors of gender-based violence, can be lifesaving. Decades of global health and development experience have shown that siloed efforts fail-and that a whole-of-government approach is essential to delivering results and ensuring efficient use of U.S. taxpayer dollars.

The abrupt dismantling of foreign assistance programs has put at risk decades of progress in human capital, goodwill towards the United States, and the rights of millions of women, girls LGBTQ+, and other marginalized communities. The decision by this government, as evidenced by Secretary Rubio's testimony during a House Appropriations hearing on the FY26 budget that Congressionally appropriated funding with decades of bipartisan support for international family planning and reproductive health is no longer being implemented as Congress intended. In fact, he said: "there is no plan to spend that money. We are not going to be in that business globally. I mean we don't, we're not going to do it." [9]

The U.S. contributed about 40% of funding from all governments in 2023,[10] funding that was distributed to over 30 low- and middle-income countries primarily through the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and USAID's Office of Population and Reproductive Health. In 2023 alone, this meant that 17.1 million unintended pregnancies and 5.2 million unsafe abortions were averted, and approximately 34,000 women did not die of preventable maternal deaths.[11]

The stories I hear from current and former PAI partners who have lost funding from the U.S. government are as unique as the individuals who receive care and services as a result of U.S. government funding. For some, this has meant that they will need to shut down, leaving their communities without access to family planning and maternal health services. For others, it means that they can no longer provide health services in rural communities, or to women and girls affected by violence and harm, as they have to scale back and make cuts.

The President's proposed budget eliminates support for family planning in its entirety and moves away from the prevention and response to HIV to simply responding. This is not only more costly—when you fail to prevent HIV you have more cases of HIV, and the spread of infections around the world and here at home it is more likely—but also denies millions of people the dignity and right to protect themselves.

We have overwhelming evidence that many women and girls are denied their fundamental rights to safety and autonomy—reflected in the alarming rise of gender-based violence and the growing prevalence of child marriage around the world. Too often, women and girls lack the power to decide if, when, or whom to marry, or to make informed choices about their own bodies. Investing in long-term HIV prevention not only lowers future health care costs—it also affirms the dignity and agency of those who are too often denied a say in their own well-being.

I recognize that Congress has many difficult decisions to make about this bill. Therefore, I strongly recommend that FY26 appropriations make a strong investment in international family planning and reproductive health programs, support

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[9] House Committee on Appropriations. Budget hearing—department of State and related programs, May 2025. https://appropriations.house.gov/schedule/hearings/budget-hearing-department-state-and-related-programs.

[10] Stephanie Oum, Adam Wexler, and Jennifer Kates. 10 Things to Know about US Funding for Global Health. Kaiser Family Foundation. Washington, DC, 2025.

[11] Guttmacher Institute. Family Planning Impact of the Trump Foreign Assistance Freeze, January 2025. https://www.guttmacher.org/2025/01/family-planning-impact-trump-foreign-assistance-freeze.

the role of UNFPA, and permanently repeal harmful and politicized executive actions like the global gag rule. Specifically:

Strategic Recommendations for the US Department of State:

—*Fund international family planning and reproductive health programs* at no less than $862 million, including $788 million for bilateral family planning and $74 million for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

—*Permanently repeal the Global Gag Rule.* For over 40 years, the Global Gag Rule has negatively impacted the health and lives of communities worldwide, particularly women, girls, and at-risk individuals. The harmful policy forces foreign NGOs to choose between providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, information, referrals, and advocacy or remaining eligible to receive U.S. global health funds. A permanent repeal would ensure that foreign nongovernmental organizations are treated fairly and afforded the ability to engage in permissible advocacy and lobbying activities on abortion with non-U.S. funding.

—*Update Kemp-Kasten amendment* to address all forms of reproductive coercion and delete the requirement for presidential determination, including but not limited to coercive abortion, involuntary sterilization, or forced pregnancy.

Thank you for considering these recommendations. Investments in international family planning and reproductive health improve the lives of people around the world and here at home, while simultaneously supporting economic development and global stability.

Sincerely,

Nabeeha Kazi Hutchins
President and CEO

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PURE EARTH

DEPARTMENT OF STATE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS: TOXIC CHEMICALS/LEAD EXPOSURE

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, Members of the subcommittee, on behalf of Pure Earth I am honored to submit testimony in support of United States leadership to help end childhood lead poisoning globally. We ask that the subcommittee direct $3 million in FY 2026 foreign operations funding to support the State Department in addressing lead exposure around the world.

We all know that lead exposure can be harmful to humans, especially children. Over the past few years, we have better understood the massive scale and impact of lead poisoning globally. One-third of the world's children have a concentration of lead in their blood at or greater than 5 micrograms/deciliter—the vast majority in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). While there is no level of exposure to lead that is known to be without harmful effects, the World Health Organization recommends that for an individual with a blood lead concentration = 5 μg/dL, the source(s) of lead exposure should be identified, and appropriate action taken to reduce and terminate exposure.

For children, exposure to lead can permanently damage their development. Lead poisoning costs children in LMICs 726 million IQ points, and accounts for up to 20 percent of the learning gap between children in rich and poor countries. Lead poisoning affects the health of pregnant mothers, and mothers with elevated blood lead levels pass that along to their developing babies. Lead exposure also has serious consequences for adults, causing increased risks of cardiovascular disease. Researchers estimate that 1.6 million to 5.5 million premature deaths a year from cardiovascular disease are directly caused by lead poisoning. Even at the lower end, the death toll is more than HIV/AIDS and malaria combined. However, global donor funding targeted at addressing lead poisoning amounts to only $20 million a year. In addition to the human costs, these effects have enormous economic consequences. World Bank researchers estimated that lead poisoning costs economies $6 trillion a year due to lost productivity from premature deaths and IQ loss, almost all in LMICs.

Because of its enormous human, social and economic impacts, lead poisoning globally profoundly affects U.S. foreign assistance goals to promote child health and development, educational attainment, and poverty reduction; and it has implications for U.S. national security and economic interests, because poverty and marginalization lead to insecurity and conflict. In the United States, we still face challenges from lead exposure due to lead-based paint and lead water pipes. In LMICs, sources of lead pollution are more varied: in addition to lead paint, other significant causes of lead poisoning include spices adulterated with lead, metal and

ceramic cookware contaminated with lead, and improper recycling of lead-acid batteries. These sources of lead exposure can threaten American children as well.

The best way to protect children globally from lead poisoning, including children in this country, is to reduce contamination at the source. Pure Earth knows from experience that there is a proven effective strategy to lower lead exposure, which includes understanding prevalence, severity, and location of exposure; determining the most significant sources of exposure and working with communities and governments to address those sources, as well as supporting populations already affected. LMICs are increasingly aware of the threat of lead poisoning and taking actions to address lead exposure, including India, Bangladesh, Philippines, Ghana, South Africa, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. However, they need help from development partners to stop childhood lead poisoning.

We respectfully request that the subcommittee designate $3 million from environmental programs, toxic chemicals funding to address lead exposure. In addition, we ask that subcommittee language be included in the report accompanying the FY 2026 State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill that explains why this issue is important, and that requires a report on U.S. Government plans to lower lead exposure in LMICs:

> *"The Committee provides not less than $3 million to reduce lead poisoning in low- and middle-income countries by reducing lead exposure risks associated with lead-contaminated sites, the unsound recycling of lead acid batteries, contaminated metal and ceramic cookware, contaminated spices and other foods, lead-based paint, cosmetics, or other exposure sources as appropriate. Lead poisoning affects half of all children in low- and middle-income countries, results in a greater mortality toll than HIV and malaria combined, can cause permanent brain damage in children, harms learning potential, and costs economies up to $6 trillion a year. Lead-contaminated goods that originate from other countries regularly poison children in the United States, requiring the U.S. Government to engage in efforts beyond our borders to protect children in the U.S. and globally."*

We thank the subcommittee for its support for lead exposure mitigation in prior appropriations legislation. Pure Earth encourages the subcommittee to allocate not less than $3 million in Fiscal Year 2026 to support cost-effective programs that help children around the world reach their full intellectual potential.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information on our efforts.

[This statement was submitted by Andrew "Drew" McCartor, President and CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RESULTS

On behalf of RESULTS, and our network of committed grassroots advocates across all 50 States, I would like to thank Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Schatz, along with the other members of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs subcommittee, for U.S. investments and commitment to addressing extreme poverty and improving health and nutrition around the world. Your support for U.S investment and impact has helped drive preventable child deaths to an all-time low globally, enabled communities to fight infectious disease, and supported millions of people to move out of extreme poverty. Recognizing the critical needs globally, the opportunity for even greater progress, and the health and security benefits to the U.S., our Nationwide network respectfully requests the committee to build on its longtime bipartisan leadership with the following priorities for FY 2026:

—*Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria*—.Recommitting to the historic 1:2 match that has successfully leveraged tens of billions in other donor commitments, and providing an initial $2 billion for next year
—*Bilateral Tuberculosis*—.$1 billion
—*Maternal and Child Health*—.$1.15 billion, including $340 million for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance for the second year of the U.S. pledge
—*Nutrition within Global Health*—.$300 million
—*International Basic Education*—.$970 million, including $150 million for the Global Partnership for Education

The bipartisan leadership of this committee has driven remarkable global progress through strategic annual funding, and the oversight and reporting requirements you've put in place. We are especially grateful for the commitment of this committee in the last few years to increasing funds for bilateral tuberculosis and maternal & child health programs, fulfilling our one-third matching commitment to

the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and faithfully making wise investments in Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. These funds supported some of the highest-impact programs and have helped save millions of lives across the planet, while protecting the health of people in the U.S. and globally.

Tragically, the Administration's recent actions have undermined decades of progress and bipartisan consensus, harming communities around the world and endangering our own health security. As you consider your appropriations levels for the Fiscal Year 2026, I urge you to also ensure the Administration properly programs the appropriated funding from this committee for global health and basic education priorities for both FY 2024 and the current fiscal year of FY2025.

A good faith review of foreign aid priorities and effectiveness is valid. Increasing the effectiveness and impact of every dollar invested in health, nutrition, education, and other poverty reduction strategies has been a priority of RESULTS for over four decades. But any review should be strategic, transparent, and aligned with the direction and funding set aside by this committee. Abruptly stepping back has jeopardized the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. Furthermore, it squanders years of strategic investment and dismantles infrastructure, partnerships, and progress that U.S. taxpayers have already funded. This will further destabilize communities and countries already facing multiple crises, increase the risk of future disease outbreaks, and erode trust in our commitment as partners.

Tuberculosis (TB) remains the world's deadliest infectious disease, claiming 1.25 million lives in 2023 alone. USAID's work on TB is a powerful example of U.S. foreign aid that benefits both the world and the United States. The bipartisan leadership of this Committee has driven enormous progress. In 2023, USAID's global TB programs supported treatment for drug-resistant TB for 113,000 people, saving lives and preventing the spread of TB that is significantly more difficult and expensive to treat. They also supported diagnosing and treating 6.4 million people with TB in the highest burden countries where TB is too often a death sentence. Getting treatment to more people is now possible because USAID helped negotiate price reductions that have allowed U.S. programs to reach hundreds of thousands more people with the same level of investment. But still 3 million people each year are never reached by health systems to access treatment for TB.

Funding levels for bilateral USAID TB programs need to be reflective of the devastating impact TB is having in the world. TB disproportionately affects low-income communities and is a key driver of poverty. It is also an airborne infectious disease that threatens all of us, especially deadly multi-drug-resistant TB. Bipartisan leadership in Congress pushed USAID to do more and do it faster with increased resources. RESULTS urges the Committee to continue its crucial leadership and meet the need by increasing resources to $1 billion for bilateral TB in FY26.

U.S. programs on TB, HIV, and malaria have all been badly set back by the Administration's abrupt stop work orders and terminations, with many programs still disrupted or ended outright. We urge you to continue to press the administration to resume the full breadth of this work with PEPFAR, alongside the President's Malaria Initiative and U.S. bilateral TB programs. And to maintain our strong one-third funding commitment for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria for both this fiscal year and the upcoming replenishment.

There is no more powerful tool for channeling resources to health than the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which plays an essential role alongside U.S. bilateral programs. Since 2002, the Global Fund partnership has saved 65 million lives working with governments and communities to scale up proven, high impact strategies and new tools to tackle these epidemics. Through this global collaboration, the U.S. has been able to massively increase burden sharing and stretch its own investments even further. With the longstanding 1:2 matching commitment, for every dollar from the U.S., we have leveraged two dollars from other donors to end these epidemics. Thanks to bipartisan leadership from this committee, during the Global Fund's last two funding cycles, the U.S. 1:2 matching commitment unlocked hundreds of millions of dollars in new funding from other donors. As a result, the Global Fund has saved millions more lives, scaled up new innovations, driven down prices, and moved us closer to the end of these health crises. Any stepping back from this longstanding U.S. 1:2 match risks losing critical matching support from other donors and causing huge setbacks to global efforts

The Global Fund has now laid out its next bold plan, ready to save an additional 23 million lives over the next 3 years. This committee can help this historic effort succeed by recommitting to the historic U.S. 1:2 match, starting with $2 billion for Fiscal Year 2026.

We also urge you to continue to prioritize funding for ending preventable child and maternal deaths. These programs, too, have been set back by program terminations, yet remain some of the most effective and high impact uses of U.S. re-

sources. A surge of funding—and accountability to deliver the funds already set aside for this purpose—is needed to protect the lives and futures of millions of people.

Measles, pneumonia, and diarrhea caused by rotavirus have all been leading killers of kids and are now all vaccine preventable. With the support of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, over 78 countries have rolled out the newest vaccines in some of the most remote and hard to reach places. U.S. support has helped Gavi to immunize over one billion children since 2000. Gavi is also instrumental in responding to epidemics such as Ebola and mpox.

Gavi now has a new plan to reach the next billion children in half the time, with more vaccines, at lower cost. Building on years of bipartisan congressional leadership, last year this committee delivered on the first installment of the U.S. contribution to this next 5-year global effort. International donors gathered in Brussels this month and made $9 billion in new commitments to Gavi, but a number of key donors have not pledged yet. A strong show of support and investment from the U.S. Congress will not only help save millions of lives and protect health security, but can also spur bolder pledges from other key donors governments. RESULTS urges the Committee to fund Gavi at $340 million for FY2026, as the next installment of Congress' multiyear commitment.

RESULTS also urges the Committee to increase the Maternal and Child Health account at USAID to $1.15 billion for FY2026 (including Gavi), to support core programs and account for the increase to Gavi that is needed. Through critical USAID investments, in 2023 the Maternal and Child Health programs helped 12 million women to give birth in a safe facility, supported lifesaving resuscitation for more than 238,000 babies not breathing at birth, and supported 10 million newborns with postnatal care. Unfortunately a huge swathe of maternal and child health programs have been terminated, such as the first U.S-funded effort in safe surgery (providing emergency cesarean sections).

Through sustained commitment, the US has helped drive down child deaths, which reached an all-time low last year. We have made incredible progress, but our work is not done. Investments in high-impact, evidence-based interventions to improve maternal and child health for the communities most in need must continue to be a centerpiece of U.S. foreign assistance.

RESULTS also urges you to increase USAID nutrition programs—which are funded by the global health account and are key to child survival—to $300 million in FY26. Malnutrition is still an underlying cause of almost half of child deaths. USAID nutrition programs support some of the most cost-effective, high-impact interventions available, such as: vitamin A; micronutrient supplementation during pregnancy; food fortification; exclusive breastfeeding support; and prevention and treatment for severe, acute malnutrition. Last year USAID programs helped reach 28 million children and 11 million pregnant women with quality, lifesaving nutrition. This is work we should all be proud of and rally behind.

RESULTS also encourages the committee to support quality basic education through both U.S. programs and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), as directed by the READ Act that was reauthorized in December 2024. We have made huge strides to ensure that basic education is equally available for girls and boys, to eliminate public school fees, and to improve learning. Unfortunately, nearly all of USAID's transformational education programs, including the U.S. investment in the Global Partnership for Education, have been terminated. We ask this committee to ensure the Administration sustains wise use of the education funds set aside for both FY2024 and FY2025, and recommit to GPE. At a time when U.S. bilateral programs have been dismantled, GPE is a turn-key tool where modest U.S. investment can help strengthen the impact of billions of dollars of domestic education funding by low incomes countries. U.S. funding for GPE has supported 253 million learners since 2022 alone. We ask that you maintain our support for Basic Education and provide no less than $150 million for the Global Partnership for Education in FY26. Access to education is the foundation for any child's future earning ability and the cornerstone of developing safe, secure, and prosperous communities and partners for the U.S.

The statistics cited throughout this testimony are drawn from public reports mandated by the accountability requirements that this committee has put in place for U.S. spending. With the strong reporting language you've attached to funding bills in recent years, we've been able to track the outcomes of these USAID and State Department programs. With this data, the committee and the public have been able to see how, as U.S. investment increases, we're also squeezing more impact from that funding. This scale of impact must be the minimum baseline for future years, and the Administration must be accountable for delivering outcomes in line with the will of Congress. Backsliding in our impact on these health and development issues

is not only morally unacceptable, but a blow to U.S. standing in the world and an increased risk for instability and disease outbreaks. Maintaining rigorous oversight and accountability is essential.

Again, thank you very much for your crucial leadership. I respectfully request that the Committee ensure the Administration makes proper use of the funds you've already appropriated, and that you fully fund this work to end needless suffering, tackle the root causes of poverty, protect us in the U.S., and support a more healthy and prosperous world.

[This statement was submitted by Dr. Joanne Carter, Executive Director.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

Chair Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and members of the subcommittee: My name is John Nanni and I submitting testimony on behalf Rotary International and nearly three hundred thousand members of Rotary clubs in the U.S. to thank you for the Committee's generous support and longstanding leadership toward a polio free world, and to encourage continuation of funding to support polio eradication activities in the State Department. We are seeking $85 million in FY2026 to protect and leverage the progress achieved to end polio once and for all.

I'm a Rotarian and one of more than 2 million polio survivors in America. I contracted polio when I was 10 months old, 6 months BEFORE the Salk Vaccine was widely tested. I was paralyzed from my neck down for 6 months. I walked a year later and played sports in high school. When I turned 40, my muscles started to die off due to overuse and I now suffer from severe Post-Polio Syndrome. I am confined to a wheelchair for most of my mobility. This issue is personal to me and to members of Rotary clubs throughout the United States. Polio eradication has been our top priority since 1985, and we have backed this with an investment of nearly three billion dollars and countless hours of volunteer service.

Impact of ongoing efforts have produced measurable results:

We are proud of our longstanding collaboration with the U.S. Government which has achieved incredible results:

—We have reduced the number of children paralyzed by polio worldwide by 99.9% since 1988.
—Over 1.8 million cases of polio were prevented, and over 20,000 polio-related deaths were averted in the U.S. through immunization between 1994–2023.[1]
—Globally, more than 20 million people are walking or alive today because of polio eradication efforts.

Update on current Global Polio Eradication Efforts:

Global progress represents the best opportunity we have ever had to achieve eradication.

Wild poliovirus transmission continues to be very restricted to just two endemic countries: Afghanistan and Pakistan. Fewer than 100 cases were confirmed in 2024 in these countries, where insecurity continues to hamper efforts to reach all children.

—These countries are treated as a single epidemiologic block due to the population movement between countries. The genetic diversity of wild poliovirus is shrinking in these two countries, with only two clusters circulating in 2024 down from 16 in 2020.
—An outbreak of wild poliovirus of Pakistani origin in Malawi and Mozambique in early 2022 was stopped thanks to aggressive outbreak response. There have been no new wild polio virus detections in these countries since August of 2022.

As long as polio exists anywhere, it is a threat everywhere.

Ongoing challenges threaten thirty years of progress, the U.S. investment of more than $4.7 billion in polio eradication, and the window of opportunity to eradicate polio.

—Setbacks in routine immunization related to the pandemic have resulted in variant poliovirus outbreaks. These outbreaks can occur if the weakened strain of the poliovirus contained in the oral polio vaccine (OPV) circulates among under and unimmunized populations for a long time.
—While these outbreaks continued in 2024, there were nearly 50% fewer cases in fewer places (280 in 19 countries in 2024 vs 529 in 24 countries in 2023.)

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[1] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7331a2.htm.

—The novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) continues to be administered to stop these outbreaks more efficiently.
—Outbreaks in four key countries, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Yemen, are considered of particular concern, accounting for two-thirds of variant polio virus cases in 2024 and sparking outbreaks in neighboring countries. The GPEI is working to stop outbreaks in these countries while also addressing outbreaks in proximate geographies and improving the timeliness and efficacy of outbreak response activities.
—While polio exists anywhere in our globalized world, it is a threat to children everywhere. In 2022, a man in New York state became the first confirmed case of polio in the U.S. in decades. Genetically linked poliovirus was also detected in wastewater in New York City and multiple counties in New York state, England, Israel and Canada. Since September of 2024, poliovirus has been detected through routine surveillance of wastewater systems in five countries in Europe (Finland, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom). While these incidents are being addressed by the National health authorities of these countries, they are relevant to the spread of virus from places where global polio eradication efforts continue and where oral polio vaccine is still used.

We can't allow these challenges to undo years of progress when achievement of our goal is within reach. Now is the time to redouble our efforts to achieve and secure a polio free world.

The requested funding focuses on the following strategic priorities:

Surveillance

Surveillance is key to provide confidence in both the presence and absence of polio virus transmission. Investments to improve surveillance capacity would include support for subnational and community-based surveillance to detect and investigate cases, particularly in hard to reach, high risk, conflict/insecure, remote, mobile and border areas; investment in lab infrastructure and data information management; increased regional and country capacity to detect and respond to outbreaks and improve the quality and timeliness of surveillance; expanded use of active surveillance, and expanded use of environmental surveillance.

Outbreak Response

Increased funding is needed to implement the following strategies to improve the speed and efficacy of outbreak response planning and execution:

—Enhancing existing in-country government coordination mechanisms to establish emergency operations centers to enhance coordination and to enable the use of real-time data for decision-making.
—Accelerating emergency outbreak response through the establishment of incident command structures at global, regional, and country levels to guide and direct outbreak response.
—Focusing on high risk and remote areas through fixed-site, mobile clinics and house-to-house planned and outbreak response immunization campaigns.
—Digitizing the entire outbreak response, from planning to campaign monitoring, and utilizing an evidence-based approach for clear assessments of immunization campaign coverage and quality.

Preventive immunization campaigns

Countries with weak health infrastructure suffered setbacks in routine immunization during the pandemic and this has been a key factor in outbreaks of variant polio virus. Funds are needed for preventive polio immunization campaigns in countries with known immunity gaps and/or which are near countries experiencing active polio outbreaks. Reaching and reducing the number of children who are missing out on any vaccination—so-called zero-dose children—is particularly important.

Integrated services

The limited geographic areas where polio still circulates in Afghanistan and Pakistan and outbreak countries are characterized by multiple, complex challenges including conflict and insecurity and are frequently areas that are unreached by other health interventions. The polio eradication program is working to reach vulnerable children in these high-risk areas with value-added interventions. These initiatives are tailored to address local needs and can include delivery of "plusses" such as treated bed nets, or integrated immunization campaigns that deliver other antigens. Such integrated efforts offer children and families some of the broader services they need while increasing demand and acceptance of polio vaccination.

U.S. investment in eradicating polio is essential for America's health security and contributes to making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

U.S. Investment in polio eradication keeps Americans Safer

Polio is considered a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. As long as there is polio anywhere in the world, polio can infect American citizens here at home and could result in new outbreaks among America's children.

U.S. efforts to stop poliovirus transmission abroad through disease surveillance and outbreak response are vital to protecting Americans from the threat of a resurgence. Polio cases could reach up to 200,000 new cases annually [2] if polio eradication efforts are stopped.

By supporting global polio eradication, the U.S. helps prevent the reintroduction of the disease within its borders. Eliminating polio globally reduces the risk of outbreaks, ensuring that Americans remain protected from this debilitating disease.

U.S. investment in global polio eradication contributes to American Prosperity

Investing in polio eradication is cost-effective. The global eradication of polio is projected to save an estimated $33 billion in health-related costs by the end of this century.[3] These savings come from avoiding the costs associated with treating polio and managing outbreaks, which can be substantial. Polio eradication is a cost-effective public health investment, as its benefits accrue forever. However, until polio is eradicated, the United States must mitigate the threat of an outbreak by continuing to vaccinate citizens against polio. The estimated cost of those efforts is $700 million annually.[4]

Investment in global polio eradication has made the U.S. stronger

The U.S. involvement in combating polio showcases a legacy of scientific innovation, public health leadership, and global cooperation. These efforts have not only protected millions from the devastating effects of polio but also strengthened global health systems, developing a global polio laboratory network that fosters international collaboration and supports Global Health Security for polio and other deadly infectious. diseases. The positive and constructive engagement and investment by the U.S. on polio eradication strengthens global health systems and offers a competitive advantage in dealing with countries where the U.S. has strategic interests and is competing against foreign adversaries which are trying to gain footholds in the same markets.

Overall, the U.S. government's investment in global polio eradication not only protects Americans but also promotes global stability and prosperity. It's a strategic investment that yields significant returns in terms of health, economic savings, and international relations help end polio forever while benefiting broader global health for years to come.

We are at a critical stage in the efforts to eradicate polio. Polio is poised to become the second disease humans have eradicated, smallpox being the first. If we stop now, polio could spread like wildfire and we could quickly go back to seeing hundreds of cases every day.

Many have forgotten how terrible polio is. As a polio survivor submitting this testimony, I am a living reminder of why the U.S. undertook polio immunization in the first place—to protect its own citizens from a devastating disease. That need remains until all polio virus transmission is stopped. It's not just the right thing to do but is a worthwhile investment that serves the American people. Now is the time to capitalize on progress to complete polio eradication, an achievement from which all Americans and the world will benefit in perpetuity.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SAVE THE CHILDREN ACTION NETWORK (SCAN)

My name is Christy Gleason, and I am the Executive Director of Save the Children Action Network (SCAN). SCAN is the 501(c)4 advocacy arm of Save the Children U.S. and a political voice for kids. We work to ensure that the issues critical to children's lives and futures in rural America and around the world are given top priority by our elected leaders. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the indispensable role United States leadership plays in supporting children experiencing extreme vulnerability across the globe to survive and thrive. I am testifying today to urge a continuation of flexible, effective U.S. foreign assistance that has protected

[2] https://www.nfid.org/polio-eradication-endgame/.
[3] https://www.cdc.gov/global-polio-vaccination/why/index.html.
[4] https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17184390/.

children everywhere, and created a safer, healthier world that has had reverberating impacts on American children and families.

Well-structured aid programs demonstrate America's strength and global leadership, advance national security interests, and support economic stability both abroad and at home, all while alleviating extreme suffering and saving lives. As such, it yields a tremendous return on investment. The significant reduction in quality and number of U.S.-funded humanitarian, development, and public health programs since January has already had dire impacts on those who rely on them for their survival and basic needs. We estimate that between 8 and 12 million people have lost access to essential health, protection and education services from the loss of Save the Children-implemented programs alone.

The vacuum created by withdrawal of the U.S. foreign assistance leadership is already having a destabilizing impact across fragile countries and strategically important regions, like DRC, Syria and the Sahel. It is increasing risks of harm and exploitation by malign actors in ways that harm children and families in the U.S. and abroad. Without action, threats of escalating community violence, children's forced recruitment into armed groups, sexual violence, and trafficking are rising.

The almost complete termination of longer-term investments in the economic development of countries and regions grappling with poverty and other vulnerabilities is intensifying the risk that fragility escalates into crisis. Child protection, education, water and sanitation, maternal and newborn care, and food security investments are key to building stable societies that reject extremism, can handle disease outbreaks before they cross borders, and are able to become active economic and security partners.

U.S. investments in children and their families around the world work. Since 2000, child deaths have dropped 55 percent in countries where the U.S. has strengthened health systems for mothers and children. Through U.S. funded assistance, we have also witnessed dramatic declines in the number of people living in extreme poverty and childhood stunting (a severe form of childhood malnutrition). Where the U.S. has invested in global food security, extreme poverty decreased by 19 percent on average. However, years of gains in outcomes for children are at risk if the U.S. does not continue to lead.

Despite progress, the need for assistance is significant. Chronic hunger afflicts one in five children globally, permanently compromising their physical and cognitive development. A combination of humanitarian crises and development challenges has led to more than 272 million children being out of school, unable to learn and grow in a safe environment. One in 11 children around the world need humanitarian interventions in 2025. Only by responding to today's crises and rebuilding more resilient, peaceful, and economically prosperous communities in their wake will we ensure a world where generations of children can grow up healthy, protected, and educated.

To that end, I testify in support of continued investments consistent with FY25 enacted levels for Development Assistance, International Disaster Assistance, Migration and Refugee Assistance, Global Food Security, Maternal and Child Health, and the Prevention and Response of Gender-Based Violence globally, including Ending Child Marriage.

I urge you to continue the bipartisan legacy of foreign assistance as a cost-effective investment in U.S. security and prosperity and an expression of American values in the FY26 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill.

Finally, I urge this committee to act on behalf of kids in the U.S. and around the world to ensure that previously appropriated funds across these functions are spent to help children live healthy and safe lives, with access to quality education.

Specifically, I urge the following:

Core Humanitarian Functions (FY26 requests: $8.7 billion, including International Disaster Assistance at $4.8 billion and Migration and Refugee Assistance at $3.9 billion).—Over 210 million children affected by man-made conflicts and natural disasters need humanitarian services and support to survive. U.S. funded humanitarian assistance saves children's lives and promotes long-standing American values. In places like Sudan, DRC, Ukraine, Syria and other regions, this lifesaving assistance keeps extremely vulnerable children protected from trafficking and exploitation; from being forcibly recruited and abused by armed groups, including violent extremist groups; and ensures that children separated from their families are able to be reunited or otherwise supported with nurturing care to grow up safe and healthy. This funding ensures children receive lifesaving medical care, including psychological first aid and critical malnutrition treatment, as well as clean water, and shelters from the elements, including the cold, rain, and snow. Furthermore, this assistance helps stop the flow of insecurity across borders, helping to stabilize fragile countries and regions in furtherance of global peace, stability, and economic pros-

perity—for children globally, including the current generation of American children and generations to come.

Robust investment in the core humanitarian functions will ensure continued U.S. global leadership in alleviating the humanitarian needs of children worldwide, in line with American values, as well as drive greater action and contributions from American allies. Maintaining our funding to scale with global needs is crucial to prevent loss of life, support stability and well-being in volatile regions, and protect and expand development gains won over decades.

We urge Congress to continue its long, bipartisan history of supporting children affected by humanitarian emergencies by prioritizing robust humanitarian base funding in the FY26 bill. We would also like to take this opportunity to warn against utilizing earmarks in funding these core humanitarian functions, as maintaining flexibility is key to ensuring that humanitarian actors can remain adaptable in their ability to address crises as they arise. We are almost always operating in a multi-crisis world spanning borders and continents; the best way we can ensure children receive the lifesaving care they need is by preserving the flexibility to devote resources where and when they are needed most.

Development Assistance (FY26 request: $3.9 billion).—A strong Development Assistance function is critical to tackling the root causes of poverty, breaking the cycle of humanitarian need and creating a virtuous cycle of market development and economic growth. It funds programs consistent with the Administration's foreign policy priorities, that combat child marriage; break down barriers to accessing education; and ensure access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene. It also boosts agricultural productivity, helping farm families be self-reliant by growing economies and creating communities that can manage chronic challenges and bounce back from crises without assistance. By investing in activities that foster self-sufficiency and market development, the U.S. bolsters its own economic opportunities. Increased economic resilience leads to a gradual decrease in dependence on foreign aid, proving to be cost-effective and key to our strategic foreign policy goals. 11 out of 15 of the top U.S. trading partners were once recipients of foreign assistance, an indication of how investing in the long-term development of future economic partners is mutually beneficial. As such, it is the backbone of U.S. investment in a more stable, prosperous world.

Global Food Security (FY26 request: $960 million).—The U.S. has long been a hub of agricultural excellence and innovation, including through expertise generated by U.S. land grant universities. Sharing these innovations to fight global hunger and malnutrition through improved agricultural productivity has made a world of difference for children. Where the U.S. has invested in global food security, extreme poverty decreased by 19 percent on average, households going hungry reduced by 30 percent on average, and the number of children stunted by poor nutrition decreased by 26 percent on average.

These investments have unlocked $5 billion in financing for food security and generated over $28 billion in agricultural sales—working to expand markets and trade in key developing countries. Notably, agriculture sector growth is up to four times more effective in lowering extreme poverty in developing countries than other sectors. Agricultural-led growth, particularly for smallholder farmers, has a strong multiplier effect. By creating jobs and reliable incomes, it gives families resources to pay school fees and healthcare costs. Efforts to strengthen food security and communities' self-sufficiency are proven to be cost-effective. Every $1 invested in this work saves up to $7 in more costly humanitarian assistance down the line.

Maternal and Child Health (FY26 request: $915 million).—Investments in maternal and child health are proven to be lifesaving. They also cement the foundation for healthy, stable societies. U.S. leadership and assistance has contributed to cutting child and maternal mortality around the world in half since 1990. In 2022, the annual number of under-5 deaths dropped below 5 million for the first time ever. In 2023, they fell even further.

Despite this progress, 4.8 million children under age five still die each year, almost one million of them on the day they are born. Moreover, newborn mortality has not decreased as quickly as child mortality. Without continued U.S. investment, we estimate that 106,000 births will take place without skilled support, directly contributing to a surge in infant and maternal mortality.

Maternal health interventions improve health outcomes of mothers, reducing the risk of postpartum hemorrhage, hypertension, infection, and obstructed labor, preventable complications that still kill 300,000 women and adolescent girls each year. These conditions can be prevented or managed with feasible, cost-effective solutions improving the nutrition and health of mothers and addressing risk factors before and during pregnancy, but continued investment and thoughtful improvements to service delivery and program design are critical.

Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Globally (FY26 request: $250 million) and Combatting Child Marriage Globally (FY26 request: $20 million).—We urge continued U.S. leadership on the prevention, mitigation, and response to gender-based violence experienced by children globally.

Gender-based violence is an early warning sign of instability and violent conflict. It also undermines the effectiveness of separate investments in global health, education, and food security. Forms of gender-based violence—such as intimate partner violence, child marriage, and female genital mutilation/cutting—are rooted and manifest in discrimination affecting women and girls in every country and community in the world. Adolescent girls are particularly at risk, especially in conflict and crisis settings.

The World Bank estimates that global economic gains from ending child marriage could reach over $500 billion per year, driven in part by the impact child marriage has on a girl's ability to complete her education and earn income over her life. Conversely, girls with a secondary education are more likely to marry later, earn more income over their lifetimes, and face fewer complications from childbirth.

Finally, we urge that Congress mandate increased U.S. investment in sex, age, and disability disaggregated data to measure progress towards gender equality outcomes and reporting on allocations of funding for all children and/or youth-focused programming.

No New Funding Directives.—Save the Children believes strongly, based on our programmatic experience, that the most effective humanitarian response and development programs are based on knowledge of local context and tailored to local priorities. This requires that funding streams allow those on the ground with intimate knowledge of the needs, challenges, opportunities and capacities to decide how funds are used and to pivot as needed in response to changing conditions. Those decisions should not be dictated from far away, as recognized in the State Department's region-based approach. Accordingly, we oppose the inclusion of any new spending directives in the FY26 appropriations bill.

CONCLUSION

I thank the subcommittee for considering my testimony as it makes decisions about how to allocate resources. Save the Children Action Network appreciates bipartisan support for programs that are essential for fighting poverty and ensuring children at home and around the world have the tools and resources they need to survive and thrive. An investment in children is an investment in U.S. safety, security and prosperity. We look forward to continuing to work alongside you as you champion and invest in the needs of children around the world, so they have what every child deserves—the opportunity to survive and thrive.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE TASK FORCE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

The Task Force for Global Health urges the subcommittee to appropriate no less than level funding for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), within bilateral economic assistance for global health programs under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the Department of State, pending foreign assistance reorganization efforts, at a level of $114.5 million for fiscal year 2026 (FY26). This would represent the fourth consecutive year of level funding for a high impact, proven and cost-effective public-private partnership that has enabled 14 countries to eliminate at least one of these blinding, disfiguring, disabling, and debilitating diseases of extreme poverty. 15 additional countries are on track to achieve the same milestone in the next 5 years, seven in just the next 2 years—if modest funding and technical assistance from the U.S. government resumes.

While the goals, organization, and administration of U.S. international assistance are being assessed, Congress can point to modest investments in NTDs—roughly 1% of U.S. global health funding annually in recent years—as an example of a best buy in international assistance that has unequivocally made America safer, stronger, and more prosperous, while delivering measurable and lasting public health impact in key partner countries. This impact has been driven by an unprecedented public-private partnership that, for every $1 of U.S. taxpayer funds invested, has leveraged $26 worth of donated NTD drugs from leading pharmaceutical companies, including Eisai Co., Ltd., GSK, Johnson & Johnson, Merck & Co. Inc., Merck KGaA, and Pfizer—over $31 billion in drugs donated to date. This impressive return on U.S. investment is matched by an outstanding track record of quantifiable public health impact. Because of the combined support of the U.S. government and private sector, 455 million people are no longer at risk of the disfiguring NTD lymphatic filariasis,

or elephantiasis; 197 million are no longer at risk of trachoma, the world's leading infectious cause of blindness; and 16 million are no longer at risk of river blindness, a painful and stigmatizing parasitic infection.

As of the date of submission of this testimony, however, all U.S. investment in NTD control and elimination through USAID have ceased, with all NTD awards having been terminated between February and April. Additionally, the rescissions request under consideration in the Senate would claw back $500 million dollars in congressionally-appropriated FY25 funds for Global Health Programs at USAID including for activities related to "infectious diseases." Without explicit direction from Congress to continue modest, targeted investments in NTDs—which leverage 26 times that amount in private sector contributions—the U.S. risks squandering hard-won gains and losing historic progress towards the elimination of horrific, but preventable, treatable, and conquerable, diseases of extreme poverty.

The Task Force for Global Health has a unique perspective on the global effort to control and eliminate NTDs and how targeted U.S. government support has accelerated progress significantly in recent years. Founded in 1984, The Task Force works with partners in more than 150 countries, including the U.S., to build national capacity to eliminate diseases, ensure access to vaccines and essential medicines, and strengthen health systems to protect populations. We are home to the very first NTD drug donation partnership, the Mectizan Donation Program, established with Merck & Co. in 1987 to steward their donation of the drug Mectizan to eliminate river blindness and, in concert with other treatments, elephantiasis. This year, the Mectizan Donation Program marks the donation of the five billionth treatment of Mectizan, a tremendous example of corporate social responsibility in service of public health. Since 2009, The Task Force has also been home to the International Trachoma Initiative, through which Pfizer has donated more than one billion treatments of azithromycin to eliminate trachoma. The Task Force has also helped steward pharmaceutical drug donations from Johnson & Johnson for soil-transmitted helminths, or intestinal worms, including hookworm, roundworm, and whipworm. We are proud of our role, in collaboration with dedicated private sector partners, in ensuring these drug donations achieve lasting public health impact.

Mapping areas in need of NTD drug donations and monitoring to ensure that these products reach countries are essential components of the journey to control and eliminate these diseases. Since fiscal year 2006, when Congress made the first appropriation for NTDs, USAID has played a pivotal role in supporting the last-mile delivery of these treatments to at-risk communities. The establishment of the USAID NTD Program helped many more countries establish and expand effective NTD treatment and prevention programs, develop robust surveillance systems, and begin working towards integrated, sustainable strategies for multi-disease efforts. To date, the USAID NTD Program has enabled the delivery of 3.3 billion NTD treatments to 1.7 billion people—a scale only possible through a public-private partnership combining the resources, expertise and energy of multiple sectors.

An essential element of this success has been identifying and implementing increasingly efficient strategies to control and eliminate NTDs, thereby ensuring the maximal benefit of limited resources. The Task Force's Coalition for Operational Research on Neglected Tropical Diseases is a leader in this work, and from 2014 until the termination of USAID funding partnered directly with the USAID NTD Program to develop evidence-based solutions to country-identified implementation challenges. As the operational effectiveness and data management lead for the Program, we helped accelerate progress toward elimination goals by ensuring that the most efficient and effective strategies were identified, tested, and improved at every step of the disease elimination process and that, as a result, funds can be redirected to other high-priority areas when a disease is successfully eliminated. Our management of critical data systems, supporting multiple USAID awards and areas of work, ensures that countries used robust, harmonized data to make implementation decisions that maximized the impact of U.S. support and donated drugs.

In 2024, a new cooperative agreement between The Task Force and the USAID NTD Program, facilitating a strong partnership with the African Research Network for NTDs and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana, was awarded to support USAID's focus on localization, building country and regional capacity to forge new partnerships, address operational challenges, and improve NTD diagnostics. These efforts, involving national governments, local research institutions, and NGOs, were focused on promoting sustainability and transitioning NTD programs to African leadership, support, and funding.

This transition is now imperiled because of the rapid withdrawal of modest, targeted U.S. funding for NTDs. As of the date of submission of this testimony, all of USAID's NTD awards have been terminated, jeopardizing progress towards disease elimination and risking wastage of treatments donated by the private sector. Phar-

maceutical companies have donated NTD treatments worth $975 million to USAID-supported countries for distribution in 2025. In the immediate term, the sudden withdrawal of U.S. support may mean these already-donated drugs go undelivered to hard-to-reach communities, with lasting effects on public health. For the NTD trachoma, for example, missing just one round of planned, repeated treatment can set back elimination by nearly 3 years in highly endemic areas. For communities where trachoma elimination was within reach at the beginning of this year, delays in treatment could allow transmission to rebound, increasing the global number of people at risk of entirely preventable blindness. Decades of progress toward eliminating trachoma could be reversed, leaving millions vulnerable to vision loss.

Additionally, the withdrawal of U.S. funding threatens ongoing surveillance efforts: more than 600 surveys-tests and exams critical to measure progress towards disease elimination, guide national programs, and ensure the most targeted use of limited resources—may be missed. For diseases on the verge of elimination, such as elephantiasis and trachoma, missed surveys mean wasted resources and slowed progress towards elimination.

The termination of the cooperative agreement awarded last year to The Task Force's Neglected Tropical Diseases Support Center has had direct effects on our workforce and highest-impact work: we have lost critical time-sensitive disease transmission data from vectors during the peak season for river blindness; frozen essential new diagnostic tests in the development pipeline; postponed vital lab training needed to make treatment campaign decisions for both elephantiasis and river blindness; halted data management and analysis to enable routine health reporting to the U.S. government; and delayed a long-anticipated transition to localized Africa-based supply chain partners and other localization and sustainability efforts. Dozens of staff positions are no longer funded, risking the loss of highly specialized expertise in a still-neglected field.

However, the indirect effects of a U.S. retreat from the NTD control and elimination effort are much broader, and could be disastrous. USAID support has been the essential glue in maintaining a complex partnership that has sustained, and attracted new partners to, a global effort to eliminate NTDs over the past 20 years. The loss of this support imperils a public-private partnership that has improved the health of over one billion people, building a healthier workforce and more stable and prosperous partners for U.S. trade and security.

By appropriating funding for NTDs in FY26, Congress can ensure this vital work resumes and hard-won progress towards disease elimination is salvaged. The private sector, international donors, and NTD-endemic country leaders all support a planned, well-managed transition towards country ownership, management, and financing of NTD control and elimination programs. This transition will not be possible, however, without a runway of modest funding from donors, including the U.S. government, to ensure technical expertise and public health infrastructure is maintained and transitioned into country health systems so progress towards disease elimination continues without interruption or setback. Without a continued short-term investment of U.S. international assistance, these diseases may resurge, undermining decades of carefully managed and hard-won progress.

Investing in NTD control and elimination is, unequivocally, a best buy in U.S. international assistance, with unmatched private sector leverage, quantifiable and lasting public health impact, and a time-limited runway of modest international assistance needed to reach global goals—with 15 previously U.S.-supported countries on track to eliminate an NTD in just the next 5 years. There is a limited window during which Congressional action—to ensure NTDs remain a priority in the future state of U.S. international assistance and are specifically funded in the FY26 bill—can contain and reverse the worst damage to an unprecedented global partnership to end the preventable suffering caused by ancient infectious diseases for good. For all of these reasons, The Task Force strongly urges the subcommittee to appropriate no less than level funding of $114.5 million for NTDs in FY26.

[This statement was submitted by Dr. Patrick O'Carroll, MD, MPH, President and CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF U.S. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COALITION

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz: On behalf of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to testify about the important resources provided in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill. In the face of evolving global threats and challenges here at home, America is at a crossroads. We have a unique opportunity to evaluate U.S. international assistance to make it an even more effective tool for advancing our security and

prosperity—and this subcommittee and this Congress have a leading role. Thoughtful reform and modernization can be implemented while sustaining and strengthening critical programs and capabilities. Wasteful spending can be surgically eliminated while ensuring sufficient resources for a range of existing and new priorities. That is why, as a starting point to protect and advance U.S. national interests, we urge you to provide $60 billion for the FY26 International Affairs Budget—the most recent funding level enacted by Congress in a full-year spending bill.

Additionally, we urge the Senate to reject the Administration's request to rescind—or permanently cancel—more than $8 billion Congress previously approved for America's diplomatic and international assistance tools. Instead, Congress should work through the regular appropriations process to evaluate the direct impacts of any changes to past and future funding to both America's national interests and its own oversight authority. As former Republican Senator Norm Coleman recently wrote in the Washington Times, "I urge my former colleagues to carefully consider the unintended consequences of this rescissions package and to take a hard look at the risks, not in spite of their commitment to fiscal responsibility, but because of it."

Our broad-based coalition of businesses, faith-based and non-profit organizations, veterans, farmers, mayors, and community leaders across the country is grateful for the longstanding bipartisan support in Congress for America's diplomatic and international assistance programs. That support has always been grounded in a commitment to ensuring taxpayer resources are spent effectively, accountably, and transparently to advance American interests.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio was right when he defined the marker for America's diplomatic and international assistance programs—to make America "safer, stronger, and more prosperous." When the U.S. spends our international affairs resources wisely, effectively, and strategically overseas, the benefits to Americans are clear—we are better equipped to outcompete rivals like China, prevent threats from reaching our shores, and strengthen our own economy.

SAFER WORLD, SAFER AMERICA

On March 25, the U.S. Intelligence Community released its unclassified Annual Threat Assessment—sounding the alarm that America's rivals "Russia, China, Iran and North Korea-individually and collectively—are challenging U.S. interests in the world by attacking or threatening others in their regions, with both asymmetric and conventional hard power tactics, and promoting alternative systems to compete with the United States, primarily in trade, finance, and security."

That is why America needs to strategically deploy all our tools of national security—including diplomatic, humanitarian, development, and global health. As Secretary Rubio has long said, "Foreign Aid is not charity. We must make sure it is well spent, but it is less than 1% of the budget and critical to our National security."

Here are three numbers to showcase the return on investment of international assistance to America's security:

—*$16.*—Every $1 the U.S. spends to prevent conflict saves an estimated $16 in response costs—helping avoid direct military interventions that are more costly in American lives and taxpayer dollars.

—*3X.*—Low- and middle-income countries with low levels of food insecurity are three times more likely not to be crisis zones with violent conflict, reinforcing how U.S. food security and humanitarian assistance help promote stability and advance U.S. national security.

—*40%.*—American farmers supply more than 40% of U.S. international food assistance and the U.S. government purchases more than $2 billion per year in crops from American farmers to help alleviate famine and prevent crises from spiraling into regional conflicts that threaten millions of lives and directly affect U.S. strategic interests.

STRONGER INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD STAGE

After the 2024 election, the Reagan National Defense Survey found that a majority of voters believe that the U.S. "should be more engaged and take the lead on the world stage"—surging 15 points over the last year.

International assistance provides an important foothold for the U.S. in regions where we are in direct competition with rivals like China. Conversely, the absence of U.S. engagement can have damaging consequences for American influence and interests. In March, I had the privilege of joining former SOUTHCOM Commander General Laura Richardson for meetings with bipartisan Members of Congress and she shared a stark example of what can happen when America does not show up. While the U.S. Ambassador post was left vacant for 5 years, Panama signed 47 bi-

lateral agreements with China—a significant and concerning expansion of Chinese influence in the Western Hemisphere. Today, with the latest addition of Colombia, 23 out of 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries have now signed up to be part of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

We also know that healthier countries make stronger allies and partners. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has saved more than 25 million lives and prevented tens of millions of HIV infections, engendering goodwill and support from African countries to advance U.S. foreign policy and national security priorities.

MORE PROSPERITY AND MORE AMERICAN JOBS

At a time when economic security is national security, America is more prosperous when we create stable export markets for U.S. goods. Since 1990, U.S. international assistance has helped to lift close to 1 billion people out of extreme poverty, creating new markets of consumers for American goods and helping to reduce America's trade deficit.

Prosper Africa, an initiative launched by the Trump Administration in 2019, is a clear example of this. Before Prosper Africa, U.S trade and investment in Africa were steadily decreasing. Since the initiative was launched, U.S. exports have steadily risen. Between 2023 and 2024, U.S. exports to Africa jumped by 11.9%, to $32.1 billion, and the trade deficit decreased by 26.4%.

These programs are directly benefiting American workers across the country. In 2023, the U.S. purchased 1.1 million metric tons of food from American farmers to help more than 45 million people with emergency food and nutrition assistance, generating more than $1.9 billion in revenue.

In these examples and others, the key takeaway is unmistakable: when done well, U.S. diplomatic and international assistance programs are a win for America.

BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM

Congress and the Administration have a responsibility to ensure that the future of U.S. international assistance is results driven, strategically leveraged, and catalytic in paying dividends for the American people. To contribute to this important conversation, USGLC released A Blueprint for America to Win in the World, with 10 actionable recommendations to maximize the impact of U.S. international assistance.

While not all-encompassing, here are a few ways to strengthen how America can win in the world through smart reforms:

—*Expand Winning Model of Negotiated Compacts.*—Pioneered by a Republican President and bipartisan leaders in Congress, the Millennium Challenge Corporation's negotiated compact model has demonstrated the success of tying U.S. international assistance to measurable and tangible results and ensuring countries have "skin in the game." By requiring compact partners to deliver on U.S. priorities—such as anticorruption, legal and regulatory reforms, and pro-business policies—we can drive meaningful change while creating opportunities for U.S. trade and investment.

—*Unleash the Private Sector.*—Leverage the power of the private sector to scale up the boldest, most transformative ideas to drive real economic growth and benefits here at home. Now is the time to expand these efforts with greater investments in development finance combined with leveraging the World Bank to compete with China. Another critical area of focus is bringing public-private cocreation to scale, including increasing clarity of what government alone can deliver, and ensuring the private sector has a real seat at the table. In addition, we must ensure that U.S. diplomatic posts have the expert capacity to integrate economic statecraft and commercial diplomacy to drive enhanced collaboration with the private sector.

—*Global Health and Humanitarian Operations.*—Humanitarian and global health operations are two critical areas where we can bolster investments in highly effective programs. On humanitarian operations, this is a critical moment to showcase American values with strengthened U.S. programs while preventing today's crises from destabilizing entire regions. In addition, now is the time to support investments that work and advance our interests—like Gavi, The Global Fund, and PEPFAR—that not only save lives and leverage burden sharing but also fortify health systems to stop infectious diseases before they reach our shores.

—*One American Brand.*—For too long, American projects overseas have had far too many logos that diminish the image and impact of U.S. international assistance. If we want to win on the global stage, it needs to be clear that aid is from

the American people. It is simple: American assistance from any agency means one big American flag logo—and frankly, the USAID tagline is worth keeping: "From the American People." Of course, there are always national security waiver exceptions.

—*Transparency and Accountability.*—As Congress and the Administration work together on the future of U.S. international assistance, strengthening transparency and accountability to ensure continued U.S. leadership and investment abroad is necessary to demonstrate economic and security benefits at home. Harnessing new technology tools will improve our ability to predict crises and respond appropriately.

Our coalition looks forward to robust engagement with bipartisan Members of Congress and Administration officials on how these ideas complement ongoing efforts to modernize and improve these tools.

A NEW ERA OF 'PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH'

Four decades ago, President Ronald Reagan dramatically reshaped our Nation's foreign policy with his 'Peace through Strength' approach by strategically deploying U.S. tools and investments to fight communism and create a zone of influence around our rivals. As part of that effort, U.S. funding for diplomacy and international assistance reached a historic height.

Today, we have an opportunity to reinvigorate the 'Peace through Strength' doctrine for a new era of American power, recognizing that it is when we leverage all tools of national security—defense, diplomacy, and international assistance—America is at its best. That means strategically assessing and aligning needs with resources. Congress can be a responsible steward of taxpayer resources—working on a bipartisan basis to eliminate waste, improve efficiency, and enhance transparency and accountability of U.S. international assistance while preserving critical funding, capabilities, and infrastructure to deliver on the Rubio Doctrine.

With enormous threats to America's security and prosperity, now is not the time to retreat from the global stage. Unfortunately, we have already seen clear evidence of how our rivals are filling the vacuum that was created by shuttering too much of our global footprint.

In the coming weeks and months, our coalition looks forward to partnering with Congress in this critical effort to ensure strategic investments in diplomacy and international assistance continue to be a win for America.

[This statement was submitted by Liz Schrayer, President and CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE U.S. OVERSEAS COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The U.S. Overseas Cooperative Development Council (OCDC) is requesting $50 million for the FY2026 Cooperative Development Program (CDP) of the Development Assistance account in the FY2026 State-Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations bill. For more than five decades, USAID has supported the development of cooperatives as part of its foreign aid program, mainly through the Cooperative Development Program (CDP) which is designed to bring U.S. leadership to the mission of capacity building for the development and growth of cooperative businesses and cooperative systems around the world. This request for $50 million is the same as was requested in FY2025.

Since 1982, the U.S. Overseas Cooperative Development Council has advanced the cooperative business model as a powerful, cost-effective international development approach based on its success in the United States. Cooperative businesses, which are privately owned on a share basis by individual members and governed through elected representatives, have measurable positive local economic development and social stability impact and a widespread U.S.-based constituency. Some cooperative businesses, such as Land O' Lakes and Ocean Spray, are household names, and an impressive 1 in 3 U.S. citizens are currently members of some type of cooperative.

Cooperatives have been important instruments in the development of our own country, and it was for this reason that cooperative development is enshrined in the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act and that there is a bi-partisan Congressionally mandated earmark for cooperative development. The calculation about the effectiveness cooperatives in U.S. assistance programs is borne out by countless examples, ranging from the rural electrification of Philippines to the establishment of one of the first organic coffee value chain tapped by U.S. companies to meet rapidly expanding U.S. demand. In these activities and many more, cooperatives have demonstrably benefited U.S. allies and the U.S. OCDC, and its members have proved to be trust-

worthy international development partner for the USG, delivering results that belie the level of U.S. investments.

Bearing out this claim, the U.S. Congress on a bipartisan basis has recognized the importance of cooperatives within international development for decades and has directed funds to support the Cooperative Development Program. Despite the successes, the alignment with President Trump's foreign policy objectives, and strong domestic support, the programs of the Cooperative Development Program were terminated on February 26, 2025. We understand that there may have been circumstances that caused the project reviews to be rushed and therefore we are asking respectfully for a reconsideration of each of the activities under this program, one of which is implemented by OCDC.

OCDC's work has quantified the measurable positive local economic development and social stability impact of cooperatives across four continents through our independent research center, using an agile, rigorous distinctive methodology, which has the advantage of yielding timely and reliable results to support decision making by the USG and foreign policymakers. In 2023, OCDC received a Cooperative Agreement ($6.4 million over 5 years) under CDP for its CIIRCLE activity to carry out an R&D function on behalf of the USG to increase the uptake and impact of cooperative development. Specifically, the evidence generated provides policymakers with the data and understanding to adopt and/or adjust policies and programs with confidence as well as to make program investments transparently in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives and countries in which the U.S. has a strategic interest.

The CIIRCLE studies are linkages to major foreign policy challenges facing the U.S., such as migration. OCDC's data shows that effective cooperative development reduces economic migration. In all countries OCDC quantified differences between those who belong to cooperatives and those who do not, and the data reveals a 10%–50% measurable advantage for the cooperative member. Across the board, the cooperative member is generally better off financially and less likely to be poor or very poor and therefore less likely to migrate for economic reasons. Cooperative members also have greater social capital, indicating strong ties to their countries, which also reduces likelihood. OCDC's Central America study, completed last year, the yielded evidence that those who belong to cooperatives are 10–11% less likely to migrate to the U.S. than those who are not members. Based on these outcomes OCDC has recommended that the USG adopt a strategy of strengthening cooperative development in the region to disincentivize out-migration.

The CIIRCLE award funded under the bi-partisan CDP directed programs provides the knowledge and assurance that the programmatic investment of U.S. resources under CDP will achieve the overarching objectives of a stronger, safer and more prosperous United States of America by linking overseas and U.S. markets as it also strengthens local self-sufficiency and economic well-being in places where the U.S. has important strategic interests. CIIRCLE enables the Administration to work intelligently within the cooperative development space and provides transparency and accountability to the American people. CIIRCLE fully aligns with the criteria of President Trump's foreign policy of a safer, stronger and more prosperous United States of America and provides an excellent deal for the American people.

We look forward to discussing CDP and our CIIRCLE award and collaborating with the Department of State to make modifications to the scope and work program to meet current priorities. In the meantime, we would be pleased to provide any additional information that you might require. I thank you in advance for the reconsideration of the termination of OCDC's CIIRCLE Cooperative Agreement and those of the other CDP implementing partners.

[This statement was submitted by Paul Hazen, Executive Director.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF UNICEF USA

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and Members of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs: On behalf of UNICEF USA's nationwide base of supporters, including more than 500,000 individual donors, 6,000 corporate, foundation, and NGO partners, and 600 clubs at high schools and colleges across the United States, it is with gratitude for the U.S. Government's longstanding, bipartisan support that I respectfully ask this subcommittee to provide a fiscal year 2026 contribution of at least $150 million to UNICEF's core resources account. Core resources are flexible funds that UNICEF uses wherever the need is greatest, enabling the organization to be on the ground before, during, and after emergencies and to scale up proven solutions for children. For that reason, I also strongly urge the Senate to immediately reject the Rescissions Act of 2025 (H.R. 4), which would eliminate core funding for UNICEF. Re-

scinding this funding would directly put the lives and futures of the most vulnerable children at risk, increase threats to U.S. security, and undermine America's moral leadership.

UNICEF USA is a U.S.-based nonprofit organization that makes it possible for the American public to support UNICEF's mission to provide every child the opportunity to survive and thrive. In many cases, UNICEF is the first and only organization able to reach children in need, delivering lifesaving medicine and nutrition and expanding access to education across the more than 190 countries and territories in which UNICEF operates. UNICEF's programs transform children's lives—and, in doing so, keep America safe and strong.

UNICEF's record of advancing America's values and interests speaks for itself. Since its creation in 1946, UNICEF has helped reach more children than any other humanitarian organization in the world. Since 1990, the organization and its partners have more than halved the number of children who die before their fifth birthday. In 2024 alone, UNICEF responded to 448 emergencies across more than 100 countries, responding to conflict and helping to stem migration. UNICEF also stands out in the United Nations system for its unique ties to the U.S. Since UNICEF's founding, each named Executive Director has been an American.

UNICEF's remarkable results reflect the generosity of the American government and our country's people. In addition to bipartisan support from Congress, I am proud to say that UNICEF USA secured more than $717 million in private contributions for UNICEF in 2024, including generous philanthropic and individual donations, faith-based partnerships, as well as cross-country participation in our annual "Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF" fundraising campaign.

UNICEF's results also reflect an investment in the U.S. In 2024, UNICEF drove $770 million in revenue back to American farmers and businesses, procuring supplies and services across 37 States, and creating jobs right here at home. Additionally, UNICEF partners with corporations headquartered in the U.S., including UPS, Prudential, Clarios, and Eli Lilly, among others, to maximize its programs for children.

For example:

—Microsoft works with UNICEF to help out-of-school children—including those in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons—resume their education.
—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Gates Foundation support UNICEF's work to detect and treat malnutrition, saving millions of children's lives.
—The Cencora Impact Foundation helps UNICEF strengthen healthcare systems and train healthcare workers.
—Kiwanis International helps UNICEF eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus and fight iodine deficiency disorders.
—And Rotary International's longstanding partnership with UNICEF and other partners has nearly eliminated polio, reducing cases by more than 99.9 percent since 1988.

Together, contributions from the public and private sectors ensure a healthier, safer, more stable world for children around the globe. And partners like these trust their investments in UNICEF. In 2024, UNICEF was ranked among the 10 top global humanitarian and development organizations in the Aid Transparency Index.

Today, however, I am deeply saddened to say that UNICEF's vital work for children and its contributions to American security and prosperity are at risk. Humanitarian and nutrition partners are facing a sharp and sudden decline in government and other funding for this lifesaving work. We urge the Administration to continue funding programs that protect and prioritize children.

There is too much at stake for children, and for American constituents and businesses, to disrupt UNICEF's work. As the subcommittee knows well, overlapping crises—from protracted conflict to frequent natural disasters—are fueling displacement and migration, increasing children's susceptibility to violence and conflict, and undermining global security. In 2025, UNICEF estimates that a staggering 213 million children will require humanitarian aid across 146 countries and territories—more than at any other point since the end of World War II. UNICEF and UNICEF USA are poised to rise to this challenge, but continued partnership from the U.S. Government will be critical.

As noted, UNICEF's nutrition programming demonstrates how high the stakes are. In 2024, UNICEF and its partners reached 441 million children under five with services to prevent all forms of malnutrition, including 9.3 million children who received treatment for severe wasting and other forms of acute malnutrition. More than 80 percent of the children who received treatment recovered fully—relying in part on a peanut-based, Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) paste made by

U.S.-based companies like MANA Nutrition and Edesia. We know that food insecurity leads to conflict and the displacement of families and communities. We cannot let these children down.

UNICEF's education programming hangs in the balance, too. In 2024, 26 million out-of-school children and adolescents gained access to education, including 9 million in humanitarian settings and 3.7 million children on the move. Learning materials reached 17.5 million children, 27 per cent in crisis- affected areas. This year, UNICEF aims to extend access to education, including preprimary education, to 24 million children in crisis settings. By creating opportunities for these children to build useful skills, UNICEF increases self-reliance, reduces criminal activity, violence, and radicalization, and strengthens communities and national economies. Studies have shown that every dollar spent on preprimary education results in $9 worth of benefits to society.

I had a chance to see some of those benefits firsthand while I was in Guatemala last summer. At one point, I found myself sitting on the floor of an early childhood center, stringing blocks together with a 3-year-old named Yariel. He was smiling wide after participating in a variety of structured play and learning activities. Five years ago, children aged four and younger from families with few resources had no access to formal preschool in Guatemala. Borrowing from successful programs elsewhere, UNICEF piloted early childhood education centers like Yariel's in several rural communities across the country. These programs were so popular among parents and have been so successful at preparing children for school that Guatemala's Ministry of Education took ownership of the approach and has expanded it to more than 500 communities to date. UNICEF's work in Guatemala—one example among thousands—represents transformative and sustainable change at work.

In addition to operating the largest humanitarian warehouse in the world, with the ability to ship lifesaving supplies anywhere in under 72 hours, UNICEF invests in long-term development work, advocating with and assisting national governments to develop budgets and systems that advance child well-being and lessen donor dependency. UNICEF's experts also collaborate with local policymakers to build capacity and construct vital infrastructure that forms the backbone of healthy, self-sufficient communities. Only 24 percent of children aged 3 to 5 in Eastern and Southern Africa have access to early learning, and 47 million children and young people remain out of school. In response, we built the capacity of 3,000 government officials, and 17 countries have now adopted Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies.

UNICEF's efficiency and agility are tied to the availability of flexible, core resources. These funds enable UNICEF to direct its lifesaving supplies and expertise when and where they are needed most—which is why the U.S. Government's voluntary contribution matters so much. All of UNICEF's funds come from voluntary contributions from public and private sources. The organization receives no direct funding from the United Nations, which enables it to operate autonomously.

Along with requesting the annual appropriation to UNICEF core resources, we are asking for support of the 150 account, which has historically included critical programmatic resources for UNICEF and others to ensure that the U.S. retains its ability to exercise soft power and assert its leadership on the global stage. UNICEF USA also supports maintaining other funding accounts that save and improve children's lives. These accounts include the Maternal and Child Health account, including specific contributions towards addressing iodine deficiency, maternal and neonatal tetanus, polio eradication, and support for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. UNICEF USA also asks the U.S. Congress to provide funding for the Nutrition, Water and Sanitation, Vulnerable Children, and International Basic Education accounts at least at the fiscal year 2024 enacted levels.

Children live in a world fraught with crises and conflicts. Far too many are denied the opportunity to meet their full potential. UNICEF is supported by Americans across all 50 States and has enjoyed decades of bipartisan backing. The subcommittee's support for at least $150 million for UNICEF's core resources, and rejecting any rescission to UNICEF funding, would enable UNICEF to continue saving children's lives, protecting the many American families and businesses who supply UNICEF's work, and helping keep America safe and strong.

Thank you for your consideration.

[This statement was submitted by Michael J. Nyenhuis, President and CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

SUPPORT FOR THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

As Chancellor of the University of California, Davis, and a member of the Fulbright Scholar Advisory Board, I am writing to express strong support for the Fulbright Program and to respectfully urge full funding for the program under the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) in the FY 2026 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill.

The Fulbright Program is one of our Nation's most effective and respected tools for advancing diplomacy, mutual understanding, and U.S. global leadership. For more than 75 years, it has connected individuals across cultures, supported global problem-solving, and built lasting educational and economic partnerships. The Fulbright program makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

In my role on the Fulbright Scholar Advisory Board, I have the privilege of helping guide and uphold the values of the Fulbright Program. I see firsthand how it prepares individuals to serve as global problem-solvers and how it strengthens our relationships around the world.

At UC Davis, Fulbright plays an essential role in our global engagement. We have been recognized as a Top Producing Institution for Fulbright U.S. Students three times, a reflection of both the strength of our applicants and our campus-wide commitment to global learning. In the 2024–25 academic year, nine of our students were selected to teach, study, or conduct research internationally. From its inception, 226 UC Davis students have received a Fulbright scholarship and have participated in the program. They have participated in 67 countries across every continent but Antarctica, helping to represent the best of American education, values, and collaboration. These students return with cross-cultural fluency, expanded academic perspectives, and a deeper sense of purpose that they bring into their careers and communities. We have 6 additional students thus far for the upcoming year and hope to see that number grow.

Our faculty and administrators also participate actively in Fulbright programs. To date, 211 UC Davis faculty and staff members have served abroad as Fulbright Scholars and Specialists. These experiences help deepen professional expertise, advance shared research, and build lasting partnerships that benefit UC Davis and the institutions we collaborate with worldwide.

We are equally proud to be a destination for Fulbright participants. UC Davis has hosted 297 Fulbright Visiting Scholars whose contributions have strengthened our academic community through teaching, mentoring, and research collaboration. As part of the Fulbright network, we also host the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program. Since 1986, UC Davis has welcomed 344 mid-career professionals from more than 100 countries, and we look forward to welcoming 10 more this academic year as part of our 34th cohort.

The impact of these programs extends beyond the classroom. Visiting scholars and fellows contribute to the regional economy through housing, dining, transportation, and cultural engagement. They also collaborate with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and local businesses—driving innovation and contributing to California's global competitiveness.

Fulbright alumni go on to serve in leadership roles across government, education, science, and industry. They help reduce barriers, promote collaboration, and strengthen the global relationships that benefit our Nation. From my perspective on the Fulbright Board, I can say with confidence that these outcomes are widespread. Across the country, Fulbright participants reflect the very best of what the United States contributes to the world: knowledge, integrity, and shared purpose.

The Fulbright Program delivers meaningful results. It supports students, faculty, and communities. It strengthens diplomacy and leadership. And it generates economic and cultural benefits that ripple far beyond any one campus.

I respectfully urge you to fully fund the Fulbright Program through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the FY 2026 SFOPS appropriations bill. The program delivers high-impact, cost-effective results that serve U.S. interests at home and abroad.

Thank you for your continued commitment to international education and exchange.

Sincerely,

Gary S. May, Chancellor, University of California, Davis
Member, Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VOICE OF AMERICA TIBETAN SERVICE

Honorable Chair and Distinguished Members of the subcommittee:

My name is Fnu Pengcuoluozhu. I am a Tibetan and a former contract employee of the Voice of America's Tibetan Service. I was born in 1990 in Tibet and now reside in the United States, where I have applied for political asylum. I grew up in Tibet and attended government-run boarding schools under the heavy-handed rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Between 2009 and 2018, while studying for my undergraduate and master's degrees, and later as a doctoral candidate in China, I became increasingly disillusioned by the atmosphere of ideological control and academic censorship. In search of truth, I took great personal risk to bypass the Great Firewall and access the Voice of America Tibetan Service online. At that time, VOA was my only window to the outside world—the only place where I could hear uncensored news, the voices of Tibetans in exile, and learn about human rights, democracy, and religious freedom. These broadcasts gave me hope and the courage to imagine a life where I could think and speak freely.

In 2018, I arrived in the United States as a visiting scholar at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Realizing that returning to Tibet would mean the end of my academic and personal freedom, I applied for asylum and was granted work authorization during the process. In 2022, I joined the VOA Tibetan Service as a contract employee. It was an honor to contribute to the same platform that had once inspired me. I was committed to amplifying the voices of those still silenced in Tibet and to sharing America's democratic values with Tibetan communities worldwide. Working for VOA remains one of the proudest periods of my life. Unfortunately, I was laid off in May 2025 due to funding constraints.

To Tibetans living under Chinese rule, the Voice of America is not just a media outlet—it is a lifeline. It is one of the few remaining trusted Tibetan-language sources of truth for those suffering under CCP censorship, and it also serves the global Tibetan diaspora. VOA tells the stories the Chinese government tries to erase and reminds the oppressed that they are not forgotten. The service reflects America's enduring commitment to truth, freedom, and the moral courage to stand against tyranny.

In recent years, the Chinese government has intensified its Tibetan-language propaganda campaign across Tibet's traditional regions—U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham—through state-run outlets like Kangba TV. These efforts push the false narrative that "Tibet is thriving under Chinese rule." The propaganda is further amplified through social media and international partnerships aimed at misleading global audiences and suppressing the voices of Tibetans in exile.

This is not merely a contest over information—it is a battle for truth, cultural survival, and identity. The CCP's media reach now extends far beyond China's borders, infiltrating Tibetan communities in Nepal, India, Europe, and even the United States. In 2017, for example, Kangba TV partnered with Nepal's Bhakti Darshan TV to launch *Gangri Tsathang,* a program targeting Tibetan exiles. In 2024, it cohosted a propaganda forum in Kathmandu, and in February 2025, it sponsored so-called "cultural exchange" performances in Switzerland and Liechtenstein—all intended to weaken Tibetan identity and suppress resistance to Chinese rule.

If the VOA Tibetan Service is shut down, it will not result in silence—it will be replaced by lies. Chinese state media will continue expanding unchecked, and Tibetans will have even fewer sources of truthful reporting. This is not only a Tibetan concern—it is an American responsibility. The VOA Tibetan Service is a vital pillar of U.S. soft power and public diplomacy. It also serves Tibetan Americans—especially elders and new immigrants with limited English—by helping them understand democracy, civic rights, and religious freedom in their new country. Without this service, these communities risk becoming isolated, misinformed, and vulnerable to Chinese influence.

From New York to Minneapolis, Seattle to San Francisco, Washington, D.C. to Denver, VOA Tibetan Service connects Tibetan Americans across the Nation. Through radio, internet, and social media, it reaches hundreds of thousands of Tibetans in Tibet, India, Nepal, Bhutan, and beyond. Shutting down this service would not simply be a budgetary matter—it would be a retreat from America's core values at a time when those values are under increasing threat.

Therefore, I respectfully urge this subcommittee to secure stable, long-term funding for the VOA Tibetan Service and formally recognize its essential role in countering CCP disinformation, strengthening America's global leadership, and defending democratic ideals.

Thank you for your attention and leadership. I speak on behalf of those who remain voiceless behind walls of censorship. Please act now to protect this vital platform—for the people of Tibet and for the values that America stands for.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VOICE OF AMERICA TIBETAN SERVICE

Honorable Chair and Members of the subcommittee:

My name is Zeren Wengmu. I am a Tibetan born in the 1990s and raised under the Chinese Communist Party's education system all the way to the level of PhD candidate. Today, I stand before you not as a scholar under that system, but as a political refugee—and as a former journalist with the Voice of America's Tibetan Service.

In 2017, I arrived in the United States as a visiting scholar at the University of Virginia. For the first time, I breathed the air of a free society. I encountered truths long suppressed by the CCP—truths about Tibet, democracy, human rights, and the resilience of exiled voices. That awakening changed the course of my life. In 2019, my husband and I applied for asylum. From that moment, I committed myself to a new path: speaking up for freedom.

That same year, I joined the VOA Tibetan Service with deep conviction and purpose. Alongside courageous colleagues, I reported in our native language to audiences in Tibet and the diaspora—breaking through censorship, offering accurate information, and planting seeds of hope. For me, this was more than a job. It was a sacred reconnection—to my homeland, to my people, and to the values that define human dignity.

Despite budget cuts and staffing reductions, we pressed forward. Under strong leadership, the Tibetan Service expanded from two weekly programs to 10 live broadcasts per week, airing twice daily, Monday through Friday. We also strengthened our presence on digital platforms, reaching younger Tibetans who rely on technology to access news from the outside world. It was not just media growth—it was a breakthrough for American values in a region sealed by authoritarian control. It was also a high-impact, low-cost tool of U.S. soft power, reaching audiences far beyond the reach of any embassy or military presence.

But just as we were gaining momentum, VOA's Tibetan radio broadcasts were abruptly suspended, and several young contract journalists—including myself—were laid off. I was devastated. If we were serving America's mission by promoting freedom, why were we cut off at such a critical moment?

To me, it was not just a professional loss. It was personal and spiritual. This work was the emotional bridge that connected me to my homeland and my identity in exile. When I received the layoff notice, a haunting phrase from Hu Xijin, the former editor-in-chief of China's state-run Global Times, came to mind: "Voice of America is just a dirty rag to be thrown away after use." That line echoed with painful irony—because for a moment, it felt like my fate.

What makes this even more painful is that I remain under transnational threat. On April 3, 2024, my father in Tibet told me a man claiming to be my "old classmate" visited our home asking about my work with VOA. That man is widely recognized in the region as a State security agent. He had previously tried to reach me through mutual acquaintances in Beijing, pressuring me for voice and video calls. I refused and blocked him.

Since I began working with VOA, my husband and I have been subjected to persistent harassment. After I hosted my first program in 2019, a former classmate sent me a screenshot with the message: "You've been noticed." In 2020, after I reported on the U.S. State Department's Losar celebration, someone sneered, "How did you get into the State Department?" When my husband appeared in a VOA interview about COVID–19 in Tibet, the police visited his family the next day and warned them to "stop spreading rumors through VOA."

These are not isolated incidents—they represent a coordinated campaign of cross-border intimidation aimed at silencing us, even on American soil.

But we did not stay silent. Because we know our voices carry the hope of those still trapped behind the wall. Since the 2008 Tibetan uprisings, a new generation of Tibetans—my generation—has begun to awaken. We have seen through the lies. We reject indoctrination. The VOA Tibetan Service has been a vital catalyst in this awakening—a beacon of truth, memory, and resistance.

Now, that beacon is being dimmed. This is not just a career disruption. It is a moral retreat. Weakening the Tibetan Service means weakening one of the last remaining Tibetan-language platforms defending our history, identity, and language. Today, over a million Tibetan children are forced into state-run boarding schools

where Tibetan is forbidden. VOA Tibetan Service is one of the last lines of defense against this cultural erasure.

I speak today with a heavy but resolute heart. I urge Congress to restore and secure long-term funding for the Voice of America Tibetan Service. This is not merely a personal appeal from a Tibetan asylum seeker. It is a principled call from someone who believes in American values—and who has risked everything to defend them.

At a time when authoritarianism is on the rise and freedom is under siege, protecting the Tibetan Service is not just about preserving a broadcast—it is about preserving a people, a language, and a legacy. It is also about sending a clear message to the world: that the United States still chooses to lead, not retreat, in the defense of liberty.

Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WATER ENGINEERS FOR THE AMERICAS AND AFRICA

Honorable Members of the Senate State and Foreign Operations Committee:

My name is Tim Wellman, and I am honored to submit this written statement on behalf of Water Engineers for the Americas and Africa (WEFTA), a global organization dedicated to advancing human dignity, health, and justice through community-based Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) initiatives. We appreciate the opportunity to convey our support for the continued funding of WASH programs as a vital component of U.S. foreign assistance.

Our organization has observed that private sector engagement and innovative funding models are crucial for scaling impact. In 2024, WEFTA's direct project impact totaled $875,760, funded by private donor contributions from foundations and individuals. In countries across Latin America and Africa—including Bolivia, Panama, El Salvador, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, and Burkina Faso—this funding catalyzed additional support from public and local sources.

Together with our partners, in 2024 we directly impacted over 154,000 lives, and our healthcare facility WASH improvements benefited more than 2.8 million people in the surrounding catchment areas. In targeted communities, access to clean water and sanitation increased to full coverage. Crucially, local communities contribute between 25% to 50% of total project costs—through labor, materials, and financial support—strengthening community ownership and ensuring long-term sustainability.

While WEFTA has operated entirely through private funding, we have witnessed the absence of U.S. government (USGOV) support for vital WASH programs in many of the communities we serve. This gap has often coincided with greater instability and unmet basic needs. Increased USGOV investment—alongside private sector support—is essential not only to improve public health, foster community development, and uphold human dignity, but also to strengthen ties of friendship and trust between the United States and partner communities abroad. Well-supported WASH programs are foundational to community stability and resilience.

Furthermore, in today's global WASH financing landscape, leveraging private philanthropy alongside public and institutional funding has proven to deliver significant benefits:

—Increased program sustainability and community ownership.
—Enhanced capacity for rapid and emergency response.
—Amplified impact through cross-sector collaboration.
—Expanded reach beyond traditional funding limits, empowering local stakeholders.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WASH IN U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene is fundamental to saving lives, fostering self-reliance, driving economic growth, and enhancing global health security via infection prevention and control. These initiatives are also crucial tools in countering efforts by adversarial nations to manipulate water resources for geopolitical influence. Well-supported WASH programs promote stability and security, aligning with U.S. strategic interests abroad.

Notably, WASH has always had full bipartisan support and has been authorized not once, but twice:

1. *The Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act 2005 (Public Law 109–121):* This bipartisan legislation prioritized sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation globally. It set measurable targets and increased coordination

among U.S. agencies, emphasizing community-led approaches, innovation, and accountability.

2. *The Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–289):* This bipartisan legislation expanded authorized funding, bolstered partnerships with local governments, established a senior coordinator for WASH, emphasized monitoring, evaluation and sustainability of WASH programs and promotes leveraging with local governments, civil society and the private sector.

CALL FOR CONTINUED FUNDING: FISCAL YEAR 2026

In light of the demonstrated impact and ongoing need, we respectfully urge the Senate to allocate not less than $451,000,000 for sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene projects in Fiscal Year 2026, consistent with Public Law 109–121, as amended by Public Law 113–289. As the Committee recognizes, access to WASH:

—Saves human lives
—Drives self-reliance and economic growth
—Supports global health security through infection prevention and control
—Counteracts adversarial attempts to control water resources and gain geopolitical influence

We are grateful that the Committee annually highlights the importance of supporting the goals outlined in the current U.S. Global Water Strategy and associated annual public reports, which enhance program effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. We strongly endorse coordinated programming that emphasizes sustainability, systems strengthening, and emergency response and request the following bill and report language be included in the FY26 legislation.

Requested Bill and Report Language

BILL TEXT:

Water And Sanitation.—Of the funds appropriated by this act, not less than $451,000,000 shall be made available for sustainable water supply and sanitation projects pursuant only to the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005 (Public Law 109–121), as amended by the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–289), of which not less than $225,500,000 shall be for programs in sub-Saharan Africa, and of which not less than $18,000,000 shall be made available to build and maintain safe latrines and non-sewered sanitation.

Report Language:

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).—The Committee recommendation includes not less than $451,000,000 in this act for sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene projects pursuant to Public Law 109–121, as amended by Public Law 113–289. The Committee recognizes the unique role of access to WASH in saving human life, driving self-reliance, enabling economic growth, supporting health security through infection prevention and control, and countering adversarial country efforts to control water resources and to gain economic and security-related advantage and influence. The Committee notes the goals of the current U.S. Global Water Strategy and the role of the related annual public reports in supporting program effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. The Committee encourages coordinated programing for sustainable WASH and systems-strengthening, alongside emergency response. The Committee includes further language under Reports under this heading.

Reports—WASH.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this act, the Secretary of State, as acting USAID Administrator, shall provide a publicly available report and a briefing to the appropriate congressional committees on fiscal year 2025 programs and funds disbursed accordance with Public Laws 116–260 and 117–103 and the US Global Water Strategy. The report shall include disaggregated funding amounts and program reach and impacts for each of the following activity areas: water, sanitation, including disbursements categorized by urban and rural sanitation, and hygiene. Not later than 90 days after the enactment of this act, the Secretary of State, as acting USAID Administrator, is further directed to provide a briefing to the relevant congressional committees on the current implementation of the U.S. Global Water Strategy within current agency structures and plans for how WASH programming will be sustained in accordance with existing statute in fiscal year 2026.

ECONOMIC, SECURITY, AND MORAL RATIONALE

Investment in WASH offers significant economic benefits—each dollar invested can produce substantial returns through healthcare savings, increased productivity, and educational attainment. These programs bolster national security by fostering resilient, stable societies less prone to conflict and extremism. Morally, access to safe water and sanitation embodies our shared values of compassion and human dignity. Supporting these initiatives aligns with our humanitarian-driven commitment to serve the vulnerable and uphold human flourishing.

Given bipartisan support, proven benefits, and moral imperatives, we strongly urge the Senate to fund at least $451 million for Fiscal Year 2026 in WASH programming and to incorporate the proposed bill and report language to ensure accountability and transparency.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to this vital issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Wellman, Executive Director

Peter G. Fant, President/Co-founder

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

Honorable Members of the Senate State and Foreign Operations Committee:

My name is Ronald Burkard and I am honored to submit this written statement in support for the continued funding of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programs as a vital component of U.S. foreign assistance.

During a forty year career with CARE and Oklahoma City-based World Neighbors as an international relief and development executive I had the pleasure of cooperating with hundreds of rural communities, local and national governments and American private donors to help provide clean water systems and sanitary facilities in isolated and impoverished communities in Central and South America.

My career responsibilities through the years included overseeing some of the U.S.'s largest PL480 food assistance programs (India and Bangladesh), disaster response, voter education, agriculture and forestry, among others. I believe that water, sanitation & hygiene programs were among the most effective, not only because of the end results but as a means of bringing communities, local governments and U.S resources together for a common purpose.

Often communities with limited histories of working together would enthusiastically organize fund-raising and work assignments with which to fulfill their responsibilities within the formal agreements signed between themselves, our NGO and the responsible government entity.

In Ecuador in the early 1990's an outbreak of cholera was moving north from Peru. In previous years rural inhabitants were anxious to obtain water supplies but questioned the need to change their sanitary habits from "out in the field" to the health education and latrines required as a condition of participation in the programs. When thanks to massive public awareness campaigns the connection between cholera and fecal transmission became known, latrines were requested by communities more often than potable water systems. Thousands of latrines were provided and cholera never took hold there.

Memories of men, women and children—young and old—working in harmony digging trenches to lay pipe that would bring water from springs on mountainsides miles away remain among the most moving of my career. These programs not only brought communities together but helped government agencies commit to fulfilling their responsibilities to improving the lives of their citizens.

For most of my career I lived with my family in nine countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We were proud to represent the United States. Often American donors would visit our programs and meet with local villagers and officials, again making friends and putting our country in a favorable light.

I respectfully urge the Senate to allocate not less than $451,000,000 for sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene projects in FY 2026, consistent with Public Law 109–121, as amended by Public Law 113–289. Programs supported by these funds will help save human lives, increase self-reliance and economic growth, support global health security through infection prevention and control and counteract adversarial attempts to control water resources and gain geopolitical influence.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ronald P. Burkard

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WORLD VISION U.S.

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Schatz, and members of the subcommittee, I am submitting this testimony on behalf of World Vision, one of the largest Christian organizations working in humanitarian relief and development. Specifically, I ask the subcommittee to fund programs within the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill at no less than $60 billion, providing at least $3.93 billion for Development Assistance, $4.779 billion for International Disaster Assistance, $3.93 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance, and $2 billion for the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria. World Vision also requests the following amounts for additional accounts within the appropriations bill:

—Maternal and Child Health: $955,000,000
—Nutrition: $165,000,000
—Family Planning and non-abortive Reproductive Health: $607,500,000
—Vulnerable Children: $31,500,000
—President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR): $4,380,000,000
—Combatting Child Marriage: $20,000,000
—Basic Education: $922,000,000
—Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH): $451,000,000

World Vision appreciates Congress' continual commitment, on a bipartisan basis, to support foreign assistance and secure the hard-won gains around the world in maternal and child health, education, HIV/AIDS, food security, protection for women and girls, and economic empowerment. Despite the incredible progress, conflict, authoritarian regimes, disease, and record-high numbers of displacement threaten these gains made over decades of international development work. Foreign assistance programs support U.S. interests and reflect our Nation's founding principles: all human beings are born with equal value and are deserving of dignity and opportunity. For nearly 250 years the United States has been a beacon of hope for those suffering from disease, poverty, and conflict through partnership with faith-based organizations, such as World Vision, to provide humanitarian relief and long-term development.

The Trump administration has emphasized a desire for a remaking of foreign assistance to bring value to the American taxpayer and make our Nation "safer, stronger, and more prosperous." We firmly believe programs funded by these accounts are an essential part of this vision. Supporting freedom and opportunity for our global neighbors expands opportunities for Americans here at home. U.S. foreign assistance programs promote economic growth and stability, strengthen trade partnerships, and attract new consumers around the world for U.S. goods and products. These programs also bolster strategic alliances, combat extremism and instability, and provide life-saving assistance. A strong American presence abroad proactively addresses global needs before they spiral into more complex and costly responses.

While we affirm the Trump administration and Congress' desire to steward our resources well, we urge the subcommittee to put forward legislation preserving current levels of funding for these critical programs to align with our National values and foreign policy objectives. Without continuation of this funding, the United States will cede its global leadership to our adversaries, resulting in the loss of lives, increased threats to our National security, and exploitation of developing countries. Additionally, we ask that funding levels ensure proper staffing to assistance programs to ensure area expertise, oversight, and institutional knowledge remains.

We also urge the subcommittee to prioritize programs impacting the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, with a focus on children. Children are often most impacted by conflict—one in four of the world's children lives in a conflict or disaster zone—without access to adequate shelter, protection, and education, and at high risk of experiencing physical, sexual and psychological abuse. By prioritizing investments in children, as well as strengthening collaboration across U.S. government programs and agencies, we can impact the next generation in a dramatic way. This must include programs focused on holistically addressing the needs of children by improving household incomes and resilience, access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), basic healthcare, positive parenting skills, protection from violence, and early childhood development. These investments fundamentally promote the interests of the United States and the American taxpayer while also recognizing the God-given dignity and value of every human life, regardless of birthplace or economic status.

Mass atrocities, authoritarian regimes, protracted conflict, and violence against the most vulnerable have driven crises to levels never seen, resulting in record numbers of forcibly displaced persons. Currently, there are over 123 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, including over 47 million children. Additionally, extreme

weather events such as droughts, flooding, and tropical cyclones can undermine already fragile communities. In alignment with President Trump's desire to stem the flow of migration to the United States, continued investment in both International Disaster Assistance and Migration and Refugee Assistance allow the United States to respond to these cascading crises that drive and exacerbate migration.

Simultaneously, continued investment in Development Assistance complements and bolsters the United States' response to these crises. Increasingly, poverty-stricken nations also face conflict, inadequate governance, frequent disasters, and other issues leading to instability, fragility, and a lack of resilience. The Development Assistance account is vital in these contexts to move countries from fragility to resilience, addressing the drivers of conflict, and seeking long-term, sustainable solutions to end poverty. As we seek to make foreign assistance more efficient, we must recognize these development interventions are often relatively low in cost and highly effective in reducing our long-term financial commitments in global crisis response.

We also ask for the subcommittee's continued support for global health programs. These investments save the lives of mothers and children, support families, enable women to earn livelihoods, and ensure children are healthy enough to attend school. These programs are not philanthropy; they are investments in the long-term economic growth of countries, enabling such countries to become U.S. trading partners and provide for their own people. Saving lives through health interventions, including immunizations, nutrition, healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, water, sanitation, and hygiene, as well as strong support of the frontline health workers delivering these services, is critical not just for health outcomes, but also economic outcomes.

As a pro-life organization, World Vision firmly believes it is essential to come alongside mothers and children to ensure they have the necessary resources to thrive—regardless of their location. A strong foundation for a child's development is critical for their future, making non-emergency nutrition assistance crucial for physical and mental health, which greatly affects future educational and economic attainment. We urge the subcommittee to preserve funding for these important programs supported by the Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning and Reproductive Health accounts which do not fund abortion.

In 2023, UNICEF estimated approximately 6.5 million children died from primarily preventable causes, such as malnutrition, malaria, or lack of immunizations, with children under five accounting for nearly 70% of these deaths. We cannot abandon the next generation in their time of greatest need. USAID's Global Health Program funding for the Vulnerable Children account delivers financing and technical assistance for the care and protection of vulnerable children, particularly those who have been separated from their families or are at risk of separation. With many current conflicts and hardships displacing children around the world, preserving funding for this account is vital to protect vulnerable children.

A vital component of the United States' global health strategy must be continued support of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund). PEPFAR is widely regarded as one of the most effective foreign assistance initiatives in history, credited with saving 26 million lives and allowing 7.8 million babies to be born HIV-free. Through the Global Fund partnership, which brings together civil society, governments, and the private sector to end HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, an estimated 65 million lives have been saved. As the Global Fund enters its replenishment cycle, we urge the United States to designate $2 billion toward this partnership and maintain its longstanding 1:2 match ratio, further encouraging other nations to also remain committed to our shared objectives.

Similarly, it is imperative that the U.S. continue to meet previous commitments made to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance. These contributions are vital for the eradication of curable diseases, alleviating the need for continued assistance. Great progress has been made toward the eradication of these diseases. However, progress is jeopardized if we fail to sustain these investments.

Additionally, World Vision requests support for the implementation of activities to address violence against women and girls, such as child, early, and forced marriage, sexual violence, female genital mutilation/cutting, and trafficking. In humanitarian emergencies, these atrocities increase as chaos and tensions grow, impacting nearly one in five women. As a critical component in protecting women and girls, the US has worked to end child marriage globally which impacts one in five girls, and we urge the subcommittee to continue funding for the Combatting Child Marriage account.

We also ask for support for U.S. Basic Education programs, including funding for Education Cannot Wait, a multilateral partnership dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises, and the Global Partnership for Education, a multi-

stakeholder partnership dedicated to transforming education in lower-income and crisis-affected countries. With 250 million children out of school globally, vital investments in quality education are critical, including programs supporting early grade literacy and improving access to education for all. In addition to providing valuable life skills, education serves as a force multiplier in the pursuit of comprehensive, sustainable development outcomes, such as improving health outcomes, decreasing gang violence, and promoting economic growth. Strong national education sectors and programs are also essential for bolstering partner countries towards self-reliance and economic prosperity.

As our Nation reconsiders the role of the United States in the world and the role of foreign assistance in our foreign policy, we urge this subcommittee to assert a strong commitment to robust, thoughtful investments that benefit American taxpayers, further our foreign policy goals, and communicate our Nation's values. Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony to the subcommittee and for your bipartisan leadership in supporting a strong foreign assistance budget. Thank you for the important work you do to serve our Nation.

[This statement was submitted by Edgar Sandoval Sr., President and CEO.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WORLD WILDLIFE FUND

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) appropriations. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is one of the world's leading conservation organizations, operating in nearly 100 countries to ensure a future in which both people and nature can thrive by helping to conserve nature and the natural resources upon which we all rely. With over one million members in the United States and over 10 million supporters globally, WWF takes an approach that integrates global reach and local impact with a scientific foundation, promoting innovative solutions to meet the needs of people and nature.

WWF asks the subcommittee to continue to fund international conservation and anti-wildlife trafficking accounts at the following levels in FY26:

—$118.75 million for Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking programs, including through the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement;
—$150.2 million for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as appropriated in Multilateral Assistance, International Financial Institutions;
—$100 million for the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation through the Economic Support Fund;
—$365.75 million for Biodiversity Conservation within Development Assistance;
—$42.7 million for the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) as part of Biodiversity Conservation within Development Assistance;
—$4 million to stop illegal timber trade as part of Biodiversity Conservation within Development Assistance;
—$15 million for the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act within Multilateral Assistance, Debt Restructuring;
—$50 million to address ocean plastic pollution within bilateral Environment Programs;
—$175.75 million for Sustainable Landscapes within bilateral Environment Programs;
—$256.5 million for Adaptation Programs within bilateral Environment Programs;
—$247 million for Clean Energy Programs within bilateral Environment Programs;
—$451 million for Global Water Security programs, within Sector Allocations.

We thank the subcommittee for past support of programs that support international conservation and combat wildlife trafficking and illegal trade in natural resources and urge continued support for these programs in FY26 as an essential component of U.S. foreign assistance that makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. This funding promotes nature conservation and improved management of natural resources in developing countries, which are highly dependent on these resources for the stability and livelihoods of their communities and for their overall economic growth. Through these programs, the U.S. is helping to prevent scarcities of water, food, and other natural resources that can exacerbate poverty and instability and contribute to conflict and forced migration. By helping to combat wildlife trafficking and illegal trade in natural resources—and the transnational criminal organizations that drive it—the U.S. is also helping to reduce corruption and financing for illicit activities, including threats to American security interests, in strategically

important regions. We urge the subcommittee to consider the significant impact that these modest investments have in combating transnational organized crime, building U.S. competitiveness in overseas markets, defending law-abiding companies and workers from illegal products and trade, supporting developing communities, and fostering stability and sustainable growth. These U.S. investments are essential elements of our foreign policy and national security agenda and should continue to be resourced at significant levels.

COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

Wildlife trafficking is a transnational organized crime that generates up to $23 billion annually in illegal profits. In addition to driving large-scale poaching, it finances criminal syndicates, armed insurgencies, and groups with terrorist ties and corrupts rule of law in the developing world. Trafficking in species that can transmit zoonotic pathogens also heightens the risk of disease outbreaks and future pandemics. In 2022, Congress reauthorized the END Wildlife Trafficking Act as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, and since 2014, Congress has provided significant funding for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking Programs, including at the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), to support strengthening law enforcement, reducing demand, and expanding international cooperation. We request $118.75 million for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking Programs in FY26, level with the FY24 and FY25 enacted levels.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) partners 183 countries with international institutions, civil society, and the private sector to enhance environmental governance and fight unsustainable depletion of natural resources that lead to food and water shortages, economic disruptions, forced migration, and other drivers of instability that can result in conflict and radicalization. The GEF provides many direct benefits to the U.S., including providing economic stability for U.S. jobs and supply chains. Every U.S. dollar invested in the GEF leverages an additional $40 from public and private partners. With 5,000 projects in 170 countries, the GEF is the single largest financier of conservation, investing nearly $21.7 billion dollars with $119 billion in co-financing over 30 years. We request $150.2 million for the GEF in FY26, as part of the 4th installment of the U.S. pledge to the 8th GEF replenishment, level with FY24 and FY25 enacted levels.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

U.S. support for Biodiversity Conservation programs protects the largest and most at-risk natural landscapes and the livelihoods of millions who depend directly on natural resources for survival and economic prosperity. By maintaining and restoring the natural resources that supply fertile soil, clean water, food and medicine, these programs play a critical role in long-term U.S. foreign policy objectives, promoting stable economics and societies around the world. By combatting illegal trade in wildlife, timber and fish, they disrupt transnational criminal organizations and prevent unfair global competition from undermining U.S. companies and workers. By conserving and restoring tropical forests and other ecosystems rich in both wildlife and carbon, they also play a critical role in reducing deforestation and harmful land use changes that threaten global environmental stability and greatly increase the risk of the spillover of zoonotic diseases. WWF requests $365.75 million for Biodiversity Conservation within Development Assistance in FY26, level with the FY24 and FY25 enacted levels. Of these funds, WWF requests that $42.7 million be directed to support the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), and that $4 million be directed towards implementation of the Lacey Act.

U.S. FOUNDATION FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

In 2024, Congress passed into law the bipartisan US Foundation for International Conservation Act, which created a new foundation to facilitate public-private partnerships that will provide long-term financing for the management of protected and conserved areas around the world. Every dollar provided by the Foundation for funded projects is to be matched 2-to-1 by private, philanthropic, and other non-federal partners, leveraging U.S. government funding to increase available resources to protect critical landscapes and seascapes in developing countries and provide sustained, long-term financing for protected and conserved areas around the world. In doing so, the projects it supports will help to support improved conservation and management of natural resources in developing countries and prevent illegal exploitation of wildlife, forests, and fisheries by criminal networks, armed groups, and

other malign actors. Congress appropriated $100 million in FY24 and FY25 for the Foundation through the Economic Support Fund. We request $100 million for the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation again in FY26.

TROPICAL FOREST AND CORAL REEF CONSERVATION ACT

The Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act (TFCCA) is a highly successful program that allows eligible countries to relieve debt owed to the U.S. Treasury in exchange for commitments to protect tropical forests and coral reef ecosystems using local funds. In 2022, Congress reauthorized the program for another 4 years. TFCCA agreements protect globally important ecosystems while strengthening civil society, building local conservation capacity, and supporting public-private partnerships in developing countries. First enacted in 1998, the program has generated nearly $300 million for long-term tropical forest protection in over a dozen countries. WWF requests $15 million in FY26 for the TFCCA, level with the FY24 and FY25 enacted levels.

SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES

Sustainable Landscapes programs support efforts to halt deforestation and forest degradation, promote responsible forestry practices, and prevent illegal logging in the world's largest and most biologically rich forests, including the Amazon, Central Africa's Congo Basin, and tropical forests of Southeast Asia. The large-scale landscapes supported by these programs are essential to local and national economic security and play a critical role in regulating regional and global environmental systems. The destruction and degradation of forests due to encroachment by development and unsustainable agricultural practices are also major drivers of the spillover of zoonotic diseases that can cause pandemics. With deforestation continuing at high rates in many regions, WWF requests $175.75 million for Sustainable Landscapes in FY26, level with the FY24 and FY25 enacted levels.

OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION

Each year, more than 11 million metric tons of plastic pollution enter the world's oceans, equivalent to a truckload of plastic every minute. Congress has recognized the increasing threat from ocean plastic pollution and directed Federal agencies to provide support for regional and global efforts to address the problem, including through grants, technical assistance, and new multilateral mechanisms. Continued funding is needed for Federal agencies to work with developing countries to improve waste management systems and reduce plastic waste and to support implementation of a forthcoming global plastic treaty. WWF requests $50 million be directed from within bilateral Environment Programs to support these efforts in FY26, an increase of 2.5 million over the FY24 and FY25 enacted levels.

ADAPTATION PROGRAMS

U.S.-funded Adaptation Programs help communities in less-developed countries access and use data and tools to build their resilience to extreme weather and other environmental risks, whether from sudden events such as floods and storms or from slower-moving events such as droughts and sea-level rise. Such extreme weather is increasing in severity, creating rising risks to security, stability, and economic growth in many parts of the world and posing existential threats to many countries, who are looking to the U.S. for assistance. For every dollar the U.S. invests in adaptation and resilience, it saves $3 in humanitarian response costs. These programs provide a triple dividend in the form of avoided losses, economic gains via innovation, and other social and environmental benefits. WWF requests $256.5 million for Adaptation Programs in FY26, level with the FY24 and FY25 enacted levels.

CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAMS

Worldwide, 1.1 billion people still lack access to energy. U.S. Federal agencies have helped developing countries create policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks in order to attract private investment in clean energy, increase energy efficiency, and expand energy access. Clean Energy programs work across all aspects of the energy sector to build strong energy systems in order to improve energy access and power global economic and social progress in the developing world. WWF requests $247 million for Clean Energy Programs in FY26, level with the FY24 and FY25 enacted levels.

GLOBAL WATER SECURITY

Water-driven stressors undermine economic productivity, governance, and social cohesion. Poor management and overuse of freshwater stresses food and energy resources, fuels conflicts within and between countries, and undermines U.S. development investments. In 2022, the State Department submitted the second Global Water Strategy to Congress, as required by the Water for the World Act. Among the strategic objectives that U.S. agencies are helping to achieve are improved water resource management and governance, including by supporting access to sustainable water supplies and sanitation while investing in healthy and resilient freshwater ecosystems. WWF requests $451 million for Global Water Security programs in FY26, level with the FY24 and FY25 enacted levels.

[This statement was submitted by Will Gartshore, Senior Director, Policy and Government Affairs.]

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