Dear President

An edited excerpt of an opinion piece titled "Dear President Trump: A Letter From the Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus"

June 26, 2017 By Barbara Lee and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

As cochairs of the bipartisan and bicameral Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus, we write to encourage you to continue the longstanding American commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Over the last two decades, because of strong bipartisan support in Congress, strong leadership from the executive branch and the tireless work of advocates, we have made tremendous progress toward ending AIDS.

In the past five years, the number of people on lifesaving antiretroviral treatment worldwide has doubled to 18.2 million—nearly 11.5 million as a result of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) has also played a significant role in reducing the number of AIDS-related deaths by 45 percent in the countries where it has had a presence since 2005.

Furthermore, the partnership between PEPFAR and the Global Fund goes far beyond ending HIV in the countries where they work—it has also significantly improved the health systems and economies of these nations.

Advances in science and treatment have transformed HIV from a fatal epidemic to a treatable chronic disease. A February 2017 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed an 18 percent decline in the number of new annual U.S. HIV cases between 2008 and 2014. The estimated number of new HIV cases fell from 45,700 in 2008 to 37,600 in 2014.

However, there is yet more work to be done. We still face significant risk of surpassing the infamous mark of a cumulative 100 million HIV cases by 2030 globally. Every week, 40,000 people around the world get HIV.

In the United States, about 55 percent of those living with HIV are virally suppressed, but 13 percent of them are not aware of their status. Given these trends, we need your assistance to keep and expand our progress.

We hope you consider the following:

- Support global health programs, such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund. Without these investments, progress stalls and previous gains could be lost.

- Support funding for research, prevention and treatment programs, such as the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program. The program has provided critical funding to cities, states, clinics and local community-based organizations. It serves more than 500,000 people and guarantees that more than 50 percent of people living with HIV in the United States are in ongoing care.

- Continue to implement the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS). The NHAS is a clear roadmap for harnessing public and private sector resources to combat HIV in the United States. The NHAS update includes key goals with quantifiable targets developed with input from multiple stakeholders to measure progress.

- Maintain the White House Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP) and the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). ONAP is tasked with coordinating governmental efforts to reduce the number of HIV cases nationwide. ONAP ensures accountability, continuity and consistency between all sectors of government and the NHAS goals. PACHA provides critical expert advice to the secretary of health and human services regarding programs, policies and research to promote effective treatment, prevention and a cure for HIV.

Because of these indispensable federal programs and advancements in treatment and prevention, we are on track to significantly reduce the number of new infections and eventually end the HIV epidemic. However, our progress depends on continued federal support and coordination that we can continue caring for patients and preventing new infections. We cannot afford to take a step back.

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