

Statement on the Biden Administration's Budget Request and Planned Vaccine Donations

June 2021

The Biden Administration recently released its [Fiscal Year 2022 \(FY22\) budget proposal](#), which includes \$63.7 billion for International Affairs and, within that, \$10 billion for Global Health. While the budget includes a 9% increase in global health funding, **the Frontline Health Workers Coalition is disappointed that the budget does not include dedicated funding to strengthen health systems and the health workforce, as the Coalition [proposed](#) in March.**

A clear lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is that a strong health workforce and resilient health systems are crucial for detecting and responding to an infectious disease outbreak while continuing delivery of essential health services. [Countries that have invested](#) both in pandemic preparedness and universal health coverage, based on strong health systems, have typically weathered the COVID-19 pandemic better than others.

Even before the pandemic the world was facing a [shortage of 18 million health workers](#), mostly in low- and middle-income countries. While we also applaud the Administration's announcement to donate [500 million doses](#) of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines to low- and middle-income countries, the health workforce requirements to get these shots into arms presents an unprecedented burden on health systems globally. There are already [unfortunate examples](#) of countries that had to destroy vaccines due to lack of capacity to build trust with communities for vaccine acceptance and promptly administer the doses. Yet the Administration will purchase the Pfizer vaccines [using funds](#) that it had [previously stated](#) would be used to strengthen health systems capacity to deliver the vaccines.

We hope that the Administration takes these issues into consideration, ensuring that countries have the capacity to safely store, transport, and promptly inject the vaccines the US plans to donate, and as it considers its future spending proposals.

Along with 37 leading global health organizations, the Frontline Health Workers Coalition has sent a [letter to Congress](#) urging that the FY 22 appropriations bill include at least \$100 million for the USAID Office of Health Systems, which lacks a dedicated funding stream and cannot effectively incentivize investment in health systems. The letter states:

Congress should not miss this opportunity to rebuild and strengthen health systems while continuing to support and address ongoing investments in global health. This funding would leverage greater investment in health systems from national governments, private sector, multilateral institutions, and philanthropy to strengthen systems in a number of critical areas, including human resources, supply chains, information systems, financial management, and financial protection for patients.

Health systems strengthening investments are needed to ensure primary health care improvements and community health workers are in place to detect and educate their communities about a public health threat. These investments can also provide countries with real time data on where their health workers are located and their capacities in order to surge these workers when and where they are needed during an emergency.

Most of the Administration's proposed increase in Global Health funding is designated for Global Health Security, including a new multilateral pandemic preparedness fund, while funding for most other global health programs remains flat. Global Health Security funding is urgently needed, but Congress should ensure that this includes flexible funding for health systems strengthening. For example, this funding could support countries to integrate community health workers into their health systems in order to provide essential services such as malaria prevention and immunization, and serve as the frontline for prevention, detection, and response to disease outbreaks.

Vice President Harris has rightly [stated](#) that "Every country must have a strong health system that everyone can access and a workforce that can detect and stop unexpected threats." Yet, only with real investments in health systems and the workforce can the world reach its COVID-19 vaccination goals while at the same time preserving other essential health services.