

March 15, 2021

Rob Fairweather
Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Acting Director Fairweather:

I am writing on behalf of the [Frontline Health Worker Coalition](#), an alliance of 38 United States-based organizations dedicated to raising the concerns of the millions of frontline health workers in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as they battle COVID-19 and its secondary impacts.

COVID-19 has devastated health services in many countries, threatening hard-won gains in infectious disease programs, reproductive health, and more. Health workers themselves have borne the brunt of this crisis, and in 2020 the world saw strikes by these workers in 84 countries, in large part due to abysmal working conditions, including inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene. The crisis has also exposed severe inequities facing women in terms of remuneration and leadership opportunities in the health field.

The U.S. has an enormous opportunity to lead the world in addressing such health system weaknesses, which threaten health gains and jeopardize global health security. Unless health systems are resilient, and staffed by paid, protected, and respected health workers, the global response to health emergencies, and rollout of key innovations, such as lifesaving vaccines, will remain incomplete and momentum to reach key global health commitments will stall.

Accordingly, we urge the Biden-Harris Administration to significantly increase bilateral U.S. investments in health system strengthening in the President's FY 2022 Budget Request. **Specifically, we urge the Administration to include in its FY2022 budget request no less than \$100 million in GHP funding for cross-cutting, system strengthening programs.**

We believe such programs are foundational to health outcomes in all disease areas, as well as in prevention and response during public health emergencies. Yet, as an example, current funding available for direct awards via the USAID Office of Health Systems totals only \$9-\$10 million annually, despite a record of success in strengthening primary care and optimizing health resources.

We believe that much greater cross-cutting investments in health systems are essential to support implementation of the priorities identified in the Administration's National Security Directive 1 on *United States Global Leadership to Strengthen the International Response to Covid-19 and to Advance Global Health Security and Biological Preparedness*.

With adequate funding the US can strengthen local frontline health workforce teams, supporting effective recruitment, distribution, and professional development. This effort should be based on concrete targets and clear accountability mechanisms, including for equitable remuneration, professional advancement, and leadership opportunities for women.

We also support strong overall funding for other bilateral and multilateral global health programs. Increasing robust U.S. investments in global health, as well as robust funding for other critical humanitarian and development programs, will enable the U.S. to reach its goal of reducing poverty and supporting communities that are more stable, resilient, and democratic. Funding for health system strengthening should be additional, so that it does not come at the expense of funding for existing humanitarian and international development programs.

President Biden has an opportunity to catalyze global progress in ending inequities in health and leave a longer-term legacy that includes both strengthened primary health care and more effective emergency response and recovery.

Our group would like to meet with you and your team at your earliest convenience to discuss our requests. We look forward to working with you to ensure the President's FY 2022 Budget Request conveys a strong commitment to progress in global health, based on the principles of equity, quality, and effective resource optimization.

Sincerely,



David Bryden
Director, Frontline Health Workers Coalition