



GUARDING AGAINST PANDEMICS

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Guarding Against Pandemics Joins 46 Organizations in Calling for Full Funding of the President's Budget Request for Pandemic Preparedness

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Guarding Against Pandemics (GAP) and 46 public health and advocacy organizations sent a letter to leadership of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce urging them to prioritize passage of the comprehensive pandemic preparedness and biodefense funding request included in President Biden's FY 2023 budget proposal.

"We have lost more than one million American lives to COVID-19," said GAP Founder and Director Gabe Bankman-Fried. "If we take one thing from this tragedy, it should be this: we can and must prepare today so we never again experience the economic hardships, public health consequences and loss of life we've seen over the past two years."

In the letter, the groups expressed their strong support for the president's proposal of \$88.2 billion in sustained, targeted investments in biodefense and pandemic preparedness over five years.

"Another infectious disease outbreak will happen," the groups warned. "Through the investments proposed by the administration, we can make sure that we are not caught flat footed ever again. Rather than spending another trillion dollars during the next pandemic, we should invest strategically in biopreparedness now which will save more lives and be cost-effective in the long run."

The full letter is below.

About Guarding Against Pandemics

Guarding Against Pandemics (GAP) is a group of scientific and political experts formed during the COVID-19 pandemic and committed to preventing the next one.

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Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chair Pallone, and Ranking Member Rogers:

As your Committees continue work on legislation aimed at strengthening our nation's defenses against pandemics and other public health security threats, we write in strong support of the comprehensive pandemic preparedness and biodefense funding request included in the FY 2023 President's Budget. We urge you to include this mandatory funding in legislation that will be considered by Congress this year.

As you know, we must bolster our public health emergency preparedness posture so that our nation is not threatened with another severe pandemic that could have even more devastating consequences than COVID-19. Over the past 2 years, over 1 million Americans have died as a result of COVID-19 and at least 140,000 children have been left without a parent or primary caregiver. There have been major economic disruptions throughout the country.

We must be better prepared. We strongly support the president's proposal of \$88.2 billion over 5 years that will allow for sustained, targeted investments in biodefense and pandemic preparedness. The United States must build a robust national biodefense and pandemic preparedness capability that will prevent future public health emergencies stemming from emerging infectious diseases, novel pathogens, as well as other biological threats, such as laboratory accidents and the deliberate use of bioweapons.

If implemented, the investments in this proposal will make transformative improvements in new vaccine technologies, therapeutics, diagnostics, laboratory security, public health security data systems, medical supply chains, and early warning systems.

This level of investment is modest relative to other efforts to create the capabilities needed to protect the Nation against other security threats. The proposed annualized cost for the Administration's preparedness plan is \$18 billion – less than what the U.S. spends on missile defense (\$20 billion/year) and significantly less than what it spends on preventing terrorism (\$170 billion/year). In addition to protecting American lives, the investment is strongly justified from an economic standpoint: If major pandemics similar to COVID-19 which has cost the U.S. roughly \$16 trillion, occur at a frequency of every 30 years, then the annualized economic impact on the U.S. would be over \$500 billion per year.

We applaud Congress, and your leadership, for its strong response to COVID-19 by providing critical emergency supplemental funding during the pandemic. Supplemental funding was necessary to fund a robust response to this health crisis. Yet this funding was directed specifically to respond to COVID-19. The next pandemic or health security threat we face will likely be substantially different, requiring the US to mount a different defense. We must break the "feast or famine" approach to funding health preparedness, in which the Federal government has responded to each previous public health emergency (COVID-19, Pandemic Influenza, Ebola, Anthrax attacks) by providing unprecedented amounts of money, followed by years of chronically underfunding our health security programs.

Another infectious disease outbreak will happen. Through the investments proposed by the administration, we can make sure that we are not caught flat footed ever again. Rather than spending another trillion dollars during the next pandemic, we should invest strategically in biopreparedness now which will save more lives and be cost-effective in the long run.

We look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead to ensure that the investments proposed by the President are included in legislation advanced by your Committees this year.

Sincerely,

Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security

Resolve to Save Lives

AIDS Action Baltimore

AIDS Foundation Chicago

AIDS United

Alliance for Biosecurity

American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP)

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Institute of Dental Public Health

American Public Health Association

Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of Nurses in AIDS Care

Association of Public Health Laboratories

Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health

Big Cities Health Coalition

Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO)

CARES

Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP)

Coalition to Stop Flu

COVID Survivors for Change

Ginkgo Bioworks

Global Health Technologies Coalition

Guarding Against Pandemics

Healthcare Distribution Alliance

Helix Op Co, LLC

Hispanic Health Network

HIV Dental Alliance

HIV Medicine Association

Infectious Diseases Society of America

Institute for Progress

National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

North Carolina AIDS Action Network

Nuclear Threat Initiative

O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law, Georgetown University
Open Philanthropy
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
SisterLove, Inc.
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists
The Gerontological Society of America
The National Association of Directors of Nursing Administration
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Trinity Health
Trust for America's Health
U.S. Biologic, Inc.
Vaccinate Your Family
Vir Biotechnology