July 9, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader  Minority Leader
United States Senate  United States Senate
S-230 Capitol Building  S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510  Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

The global outbreak of COVID-19 has demonstrated that threats from infectious diseases know no borders and reinforced the harsh reality that as long as this pandemic is spreading anywhere in the world, Americans are also vulnerable. As the Senate considers the next phase of emergency funding to address the threat caused by this pandemic, we write to strongly support significant U.S. investment in the international response.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 70 percent of the world remains underprepared to prevent, detect, and respond to a public health emergency. With more than 12 million cases in more than 180 countries, it is clear that no matter how successful we are at fighting COVID-19 here at home, we will never stop its spread – or prevent it from rebounding back to our shores – if we are not also fighting it around the world. U.S. global leadership in combatting COVID-19 is directly tied to protecting the health, security, and economic interests of all Americans.

COVID-19’s spread also has serious national security implications for America. According to the International Rescue Committee, up to 1 billion people in the world’s most fragile states are at risk of contracting COVID-19, and, according to reports from senior officials in the U.S. military, the spread of the virus could lead to a resurgence of ISIS in Syria. That is why top retired military leaders have called on Congress to “meet this challenge with the arsenal of America’s global health, humanitarian, and economic toolkit. The simple truth is we can pay now or we will pay later.”

To protect American jobs and help ensure our economy can recover as quickly as possible, we also need to confront the dire humanitarian and economic consequences in emerging and developing markets. More than 50 percent of U.S. exports already went to the developing world before COVID-19 struck. As we continue to counter the global influence of countries like China, we can’t risk sitting on the sidelines.

At the same time, we cannot forget that this pandemic will disproportionately impact the world’s most vulnerable – undermining decades of progress. As many as half a billion people could be pushed into poverty and three dozen countries – including Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen – could experience famines in 2020, pushing an additional 130 million people to the brink of starvation.
Americans across the political spectrum overwhelmingly agree that the U.S. must lead a global response to this pandemic. Simply put, we cannot afford to ignore the international component of a comprehensive COVID-19 response if we want to be successful.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the next phase of emergency funding to address COVID-19 includes a robust, coordinated, and sufficiently resourced international response.

Sincerely,

Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

Marco Rubio  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

James E. Risch  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator
/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator

John Boozman
United States Senator
CC: Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy of the Senate Committee on Appropriations
Chairman Graham of the Senate State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed
Jack Reed
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator