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Attention:

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

Regarding:

Foreign Assistance Programs supported by the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

To the honorable Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, commonly referred to as SFOPS, I would like to begin my comments by thanking each of you for your continued support for global health. The millions of lives saved by your support of these programs demonstrates the importance of U.S. leadership to the world, and the achievements made against diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and many more are directly attributed to the decisions you have made to fund these needed programs.

These last two years have demonstrated the importance and necessity of strong health systems and global coordination and cooperation to support global health programs. Diseases do not respect national borders, nor differentiate between economic status or racial identity. What is needed to fight diseases are access to appropriate medicines and supplies, trained and competent staff to use and distribute them, and health services that are clean, accessible, and trusted by their communities. We need supply chains with systems that can identify the need to restock medications and diagnostic tools before there are stockouts. Finally, we need research and development professionals that can not only develop the next wave of medicines, vaccines, and diagnostics, but can ensure the existing tools we have to fight diseases remain effective.

As many of the members on this committee know, Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH) is a global network of over 100 organizations and hundreds of individuals committed to advancing health and wholeness. Motivated by our Christian faith and values, CCIH envisions a world where all have access to quality healthcare and prevention services. Our membership represents the broad spectrum of Christians and their partners working in global health, such as program implementers, Christian Health Associations, as well as academic and training institutions, working in over 90 countries around the world. I am inspired each and every day as I talk to our members about their work, accomplishments and even their challenges to reach the goal that no one should die from a preventable disease.

As this committee deliberates on providing resources to a multitude of worthy and

important causes, I would urge you to consider that global health programs *are working and providing proven results*. Not only are they saving lives by preventing the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, but the lessons learned and health systems strengthened by these investments provide the tools needed to address concentrated epidemics (like Ebola), pandemics (such as COVID-19), and long term health issues such as non-communicable diseases.

I would especially highlight the significant contributions made to global health by faith-based organizations (FBOs) in global health. Why? Here are three reasons:

1. These organizations are often responsible for providing care to the “last mile” communities, which are generally viewed as living in remote rural areas, but also include underserved urban communities as well. FBOs are often the last line of defense for vulnerable and ostracized populations who have nowhere else to go for treatment.
2. Additionally, FBOs are commonly staffed and led by people who are from and live among the community, and have the implicit trust of the people they are working with and caring for.
3. FBOs constitute a substantial and vital part of health systems, but are frequently overlooked by U.S. and other donor programs. A recent [CCIH publication](#) concluded that in only 15 countries in Sub Saharan Africa, FBOs operate 1,276 hospitals, 6,497 health centers and clinics, 287 community health programs, 341 training institutions for nurses and clinical staff, and 39 drug and supply organizations. All of these are organized under umbrella health networks, making them the only multi-country platform to launch successful and scalable health programs.
4. FBOs are intrinsically linked with local religious leaders, which is tremendously strategic given that [84% of the world’s population](#) belongs to a major religion. Faith leaders enjoy trust in communities and are natural allies to improving health - when they are well informed and engaged.

The question we often ask is: how can any global health program be successful at scale if it does not include the expertise and capacity of the faith-based sector? I therefore urge the committee to continue to view FBOs as an integral piece in implementing these life-saving programs, as well as partners in the strategy development stage as well.

## **Department of State**

### President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

From PEPFAR’s inception in 2003, the faith community has been an integral piece of the U.S. response to the HIV/AIDS crisis. CCIH and our members are proud to continue our support for this vital program, and would like to again thank the members of this committee for their support of Dr. Nkengasong to lead PEPFAR. This initiative, and the countless people and programs who partner with PEPFAR, has been the main reason a diagnosis of HIV/AIDS is no longer a death sentence for millions around the world. The faith community has worked to reduce stigma, encouraging more people to get tested to know their status, and to receive treatment if they are positive, or to encourage behaviors to remain negative. PEPFAR also provides cross-cutting training procedures to make health systems more resilient and robust to handle the ever-changing health challenges we face. It is my hope you will take these successes of the past and opportunities for the future in consideration and provide robust funding for PEPFAR.

## Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund)

Given that FY23 will help set the tone for the Global Fund's Seventh Replenishment Cycle, it is my hope the committee will give strong consideration to providing a full contribution to the Global Fund. The relationship between the Global Fund and PEPFAR is complimentary, allowing for coordination of efforts to achieve an AIDS-free generation. The leveraging power of the U.S. contribution to the Global Fund ensures that donor partners remain engaged in these health challenges, and also provides incentives for recipient countries to put their domestic resources towards tackling these global health issues as well.

## **USAID**

### Maternal and Child Health

Healthy mothers and children are vital to strong families and communities. These programs provide for clean water, sanitation, and hygiene; nutrition; and immunization initiatives, which help create the foundation for a safe and healthy community. These programs also have the benefit of reinforcing one another, as cleaner environments and access to nutritious food allow for healthier immune systems, making vaccinations more effective. It is my hope this committee will provide robust funding to this account, so that these programs might continue to successfully save the lives of women and children, and reverse the backsliding we have seen take place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Family Planning

The term "Family Planning," as defined by CCIH means, "enabling couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy, not including abortion, harmonious with their values and religious beliefs." Due to poverty and lack of knowledge about healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies (HTSP), many families in developing nations are not able to plan their pregnancies for when they are healthiest for the mother and child.

Families in developing countries often struggle to feed and clothe their children, with many living on less than \$2 a day, according to the World Bank Poverty Overview. HTSP enables families to space births and provide the best health outcome for the mother and child; enabling parents to determine for themselves the healthy size of their family, and answer our Christian calling to serve. There cannot be a fully functioning health system that does not provide families the ability to plan for adding to their family in a safe way. I would reiterate, there cannot be a functional and fully strengthened health system that does not support family planning services, and I would urge this committee to continue its support for these important initiatives.

### President's Malaria Initiative (PMI)

Having highlighted the importance of supporting maternal and child health programs I would be remiss if I did not mention one of the flagship efforts to promote global health. PMI has not only been one of the most successful initiatives supported by Congress and USAID, it also serves as a model for agency-to-agency coordination and cooperation, focused on a common cause. The Centers for Disease Control's Malaria and Parasitic Division and PMI work hand in glove for the common cause of developing new generations of tools to eliminate malaria and to ensure those tools are placed in the hands of communities who are the most vulnerable to malaria. As you deliberate funding levels, I would again urge this committee to support programs that have a

proven track record of producing results for both these important agencies.

### Climate Adaptation

It is not for me, nor for our members, to determine the combination of factors that is leading to climate change. However, what I can speak to is the impact these events are having as our member organizations deal with the aftermath of changing weather patterns and their increased severity. We know that after extreme weather events, malaria, respiratory, and other infectious diseases see an increase in cases at hospitals and clinics. Additionally, we know that extreme heat waves can be deadly, especially to vulnerable populations like the elderly and the very young. These events can undermine agriculture and food security programs, which exacerbates malnutrition and stunting cases throughout an entire region.

Recent health emergencies such as Ebola and COVID-19 highlighted the importance of resilient health systems, and the key role FBOs have within them. CCIH recently initiated a climate adaptation survey to understand how (or if) this is an issue our members want us to address. Sixty-three percent of the respondents said they have taken steps towards climate adaptation. Almost all participating organizations in the survey said they would like to learn more about addressing the impact on global health, building resilient systems, emergency preparedness, working with the U.S. government and their own governments to address this issue. I would ask the committee to continue to support robust funding for global health security and climate adaptation initiatives that can have a multiplier effect on global health programs.

### COVID-19

Finally, I would like to underscore the global pandemic, COVID-19, which has been alluded to throughout this submitted testimony but must be highlighted on its own. This deadly disease has disrupted our lives and negatively impacted other global health priorities supported by this committee. I understand the weariness of dealing with the pandemic, and desire to move forward to other issues. However, I urge this committee to remember that where the U.S. leads, the world will follow. If the U.S. continues to support and provide access to COVID-19 vaccines (in contrast to the substandard vaccines provided by Russia and China) the world will follow and we can successfully defeat this pandemic and provide ourselves with the tools to monitor and prevent the next pandemic.

In closing, I thank this committee for your continued support of global health programs. Your work, as well as your committee and personal office staff, have saved the lives of millions around the world, and made a positive impact on millions more. CCIH, and our partners across the globe, stand ready to continue to be a resource to this committee and your colleagues throughout the Senate Chamber to highlight the value of these live-saving initiatives.