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One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

President Trump's decision to halt funding for the World Health Organization (WHO) in the midst of a global pandemic is counterproductive and puts lives at risk. Attacking the WHO, rather than the COVID-19 outbreak, will only worsen an already dire situation by undermining one of our key tools to fight the spreading disease. The Administration's explanation for this decision is inadequate, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs is determined to understand the reasons behind this self-defeating withdrawal from global leadership.

The WHO is an imperfect organization that is only as functional as its member states empower it to be. It has made mistakes during the course of this unprecedented emergency, and I would support reforms to strengthen the organization. But, certainly, cutting the WHO's funding while the world confronts the COVID-19 tragedy is not the answer. We are facing a global health emergency, requiring a comprehensive effort. The WHO has played an essential role coordinating among governments around the world, and was quick to declare the spread of COVID-19 a health emergency and a pandemic. The WHO's efforts to help slow the spread and flatten the curve have been invaluable.

The Administration's response, on the other hand, has been calamitous. A growing record of public reporting points to the President's policy of denial, deflection, and delay, despite ample intelligence and expertise that warned of this pandemic's lethal potential. For the entire month of February, the President, along with some of his closest advisors, led the American people to

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believe that this crisis was under control.¹ However, hard experience has demonstrated that, in fact, the opposite was true, as we saw COVID continue to spread throughout the United States.

Diplomatic, development, and global health professionals have warned that cutting the WHO's funding at this time will only hurt the global response and provide another opportunity for China to exert its influence. It was reported recently that State Department officials drafted a memo to you warning of our loss of influence. The officials highlighted that the anti-WHO effort "will impact over \$50 million in U.S. assistance planned to help host governments address urgent needs and risks undermining the U.S. narrative of a long-standing health leader, ceding ground to the [People's Republic of China]."² But, to date, the Department of State's justification for cutting WHO funding has come to the Congress in the form of a one-page talking points "fact sheet" that contains few facts, no plan, and no explanation of how suspending funds for the WHO will save lives here at home or around the world.

In light of the above and in order to determine the appropriate legislative response, I ask that the Department produce to the Committee on Foreign Affairs no later than **5:00pm on Monday, May 4, 2020**, the following:

From December 1, 2019 to the present:

1. Any and all documents referring, relating to, or referencing the decision to withhold funding from the WHO.
2. A complete and unredacted list of any and all interagency meetings (sub-PCC, PCC, DC, PC, or NSC) held between December 1, 2019 and April 14, 2020 in which State Department officials took part or which they attended, and at which funding for WHO was discussed. For each such meeting, provide the date and a list of attendees, including the names of the individuals and the agencies, Departments, or entities represented.
3. A complete and unredacted list of any State Department and USAID officials who were consulted by the White House outside of such formal interagency meetings prior to the President's decision to suspend WHO funding, to include the date of such consultations and the content of their recommendations.

¹ See *34 Times Trump Downplayed the Coronavirus*, Washington Post, April 13, 2020 (online at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/34-times-trump-downplayed-the-coronavirus/2020/03/05/790f5afb-4dda-48bf-abe1-b7d152d5138c_video.html).

² See Yeganeh Torbati, *Trump Administration Officials Warned Against Halting Funding to WHO, Leaked Memo Shows*, ProPublica, April 15, 2020 (online at: <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-administration-officials-warned-against-halting-funding-to-who-leaked-memo-shows>).

4. A complete description of the legal authority or authorities pursuant to which the Administration intends to execute the WHO funding suspension, as well as a complete description of when the suspension will take effect, and the precise amount of funding to be withheld as a result of the suspension.
5. Any and all correspondence between State Department Officials and officials of the WHO regarding the coronavirus/COVID-19.
6. Complete and unredacted copies of any and all documents that assess the potential impact of the WHO funding suspension on both the global and U.S. responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the implications for longstanding relationships and coordination between WHO and U.S. agencies.
7. Any and all documents referring, relating to, or referencing, an inquiry, investigation, review, or other fact-finding exercise regarding the WHO and the coronavirus/COVID-19.
8. Any and all correspondence between and among anyone not employed by the Executive Branch of the United States and officials in the Office of the Secretary, including but not limited to yourself, as well as Counselor Ulrich Brechbuhl, and Undersecretary for Management Brian Bulatao regarding funding for the WHO.
9. Complete and unredacted copies of any and all documents created on or before April 14, 2020 that discuss, reference, or refer in any way to the Administration's policy rationale for instituting the WHO funding suspension during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including how the decision and its timing are necessary to achieve the Administration's "reopening" plan goals.
10. A complete and unredacted list of United States government personnel who worked at or were detailed to the WHO, in which WHO office they worked, and for how long they served there.
11. A complete and unredacted list of WHO hosted or coordinated meetings or teleconferences in which senior United States government officials (Assistant Secretary/Agency Director or above) participated and the subjects of those meetings.

My staff is prepared to work cooperatively with you to facilitate the production of these documents. If you fail to provide these materials by the above deadline, the Committee will consider all other measures at its disposal to compel their production. Please contact the Committee staff if you have any questions.

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Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Eliot L. Engel in blue ink.

ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman

CC:
John Barsa, Acting Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development