

March 4, 2021

The Honorable Robert S. Fairweather
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Acting Director Fairweather:

On behalf of the members of the Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC)—a group of 35 organizations advancing policies to accelerate the creation of new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and other health tools for neglected diseases and health conditions—I write to highlight the critical role of US programs that support global health research and development (R&D) and encourage your continued support for this important work. We would like to emphasize the need for dedicated funding for emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) in particular as you work to finalize the President’s budget request for fiscal year 2022 (FY22).

US investment in the development of new vaccines, drugs, devices, diagnostics, and other health technologies is essential to addressing some of the world’s most pressing health challenges—from enduring threats like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria; to the current global challenge of ending the COVID-19 pandemic; to emerging threats like pandemic influenza, antimicrobial resistance, and EIDs. The latter encompasses both newly recognized diseases and existing diseases that are changing and spreading rapidly. The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 and the resulting COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the importance of identifying, containing, and treating EIDs as quickly as possible, including through the development of new diagnostics, therapies, vaccines, and other preventative tools and health products.

At the forefront of these R&D efforts is the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), which supports the development of vaccines, drugs, and other medical countermeasures (MCMs) to protect Americans against threats to public health like EIDs. BARDA works with industry and other partners to bridge the “valley of death” between basic research and product development, where R&D efforts most often fail. Through unique contracting and incentive mechanisms, BARDA’s partnerships ensure promising research is translated into urgently needed medical products by creating commercial incentives for developers that would otherwise not exist. BARDA’s work has advanced eight Food and Drug Administration (FDA)–approved products for Ebola and Zika, more than 75 products in development for COVID-19, and 78 projects to advance innovations for antimicrobial resistance.

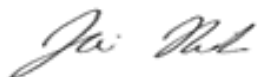
Given BARDA’s successes and the need to be proactive against EIDs, we believe OMB should add an EID line item for BARDA in President Biden’s FY22 budget request, funded at a minimum of \$300 million. A separate line is necessary to ensure that BARDA directs sufficient resources to address EIDs while increasing transparency and accountability for EID investments. Congress has indicated the importance of dedicated resources to address EIDs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by regularly including a line item for EID budget activity. We believe a commensurate line for BARDA is necessary as Congress currently relies on appropriations report language to instruct BARDA to include

EID research. This is insufficient to direct the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response to allocate a set amount toward EIDs and leaves EIDs at the whim of other competing priorities. An EID line item for BARDA would complement the CDC line item and enshrine a vital R&D program into law.

Dedicated and sustained funding for EID research will provide certainty and allow BARDA to pursue forward-looking investments in EIDs that help ensure we have countermeasures for naturally occurring threats when we need them. Reliable annual funding will also reduce reliance on emergency appropriations, which are often greater in scale than annual funding and come too late to provide MCMs needed during an active emergency. Indeed, much of BARDA's success in advancing MCMs for Ebola and Zika was funded by supplemental appropriations allocated during those global health emergencies, and while this funding supported the development of eight FDA-approved products, many completed development after the peak of the emergencies for which they were most needed. We are at an even more stark peak of the unfortunate "boom and bust" cycle of emergency funding for R&D, with BARDA having been appropriated emergency funding for COVID-19 that is a staggering 44 times its FY21 congressional appropriation for all threats in its portfolio. Creating an EID line within BARDA's budget and funding it at a minimum of \$300 million is prudent insurance against the need for far more costly emergency appropriations in the future. Moreover, sustained funding will redound to the United States' economic benefit. EID R&D is a "best buy" for the United States, from both a strategic and humanitarian perspective. GHTC and our members strongly encourage you to include EID research at BARDA as a line item in President Biden's upcoming budget request.

Thank you for considering our request. Please do not hesitate to contact GHTC's US Policy and Advocacy Officer Emily Conron at econron@ghtcoalition.org or (202) 540-4403 if you have questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,



Jamie Bay Nishi
GHTC Director