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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 22, 2020

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The international community faces an unprecedented challenge in confronting the rapid global spread of COVID-19 – a disease that already claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Americans. As the United States faces some of its darkest days in this struggle, we are gravely concerned by your announcement on April 14 that you are suspending funding for the World Health Organization (WHO). This policy is profoundly misguided and appears to be an effort to scapegoat the WHO in order to deflect attention from your administration’s mismanaged and politicized response to the pandemic.

This global health emergency requires a comprehensive, global response. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres summed it up when he asserted, “[W]e are only as strong as the weakest health system in our interconnected world.” The WHO plays a vital role in supporting and enforcing international health regulations, educating the public, and strengthening the ability of health systems – particularly those in the developing world – to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks. The organization is not perfect, and we should thoroughly review its early handling of this crisis, particularly its engagement with Chinese authorities, and advocate for appropriate reforms.

But let’s be clear: mistakes made by the WHO do not justify your halt in funding; nor do they excuse the serious failures of your administration in confronting this pandemic. Indeed, had your administration worked more closely with the organization in the early stages of this crisis, it may have helped reduce the massive outbreak we’ve seen in this country. Instead, the U.S. seat on the WHO Executive Board has remained vacant since 2018, an astonishing abdication of American leadership at a time of international crisis, hurting the global response and expanding, not reducing China’s ability to exert its influence.

President Donald J. Trump
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Halting funding to the WHO at this time is like cutting funding to the fire department in the middle of a blaze. Retreating from global health institutions at this time will only hinder our ability to fight the Coronavirus, thus putting our national security and American lives at risk. Consequently, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to immediately restore funding for the WHO and take all other necessary steps to confront this pandemic.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman



BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress



GREGORY W. MEEKS
Member of Congress



ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress



GERALD E. CONNOLLY
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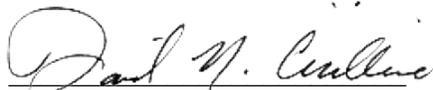
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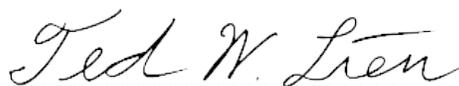
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