

May 25, 2016

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Armed Services:

As members of the Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC)—a group of more than 25 nonprofit organizations working to increase awareness of the vital role health technologies play in saving lives around the world—we write to highlight the critical role of medical and global health research and development (R&D) programs at the US Department of Defense (DoD) and urge your continued support for these efforts vital to our national and global health security. Importantly, we ask that you oppose provisions in Sections 756 and 898 of the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (FY17 NDAA), which would limit our nation’s ability to develop medical countermeasures necessary to protect our troops and save lives around the world.

While we understand that the primary mission of the DoD is to support our military men and women, we write to stress the importance of the DoD’s infectious disease research for protecting the well-being of our service members overseas, the health of American civilians at home, and also supporting US global health efforts to address HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases in low-income countries—all essential aspects of US global health security efforts.

For example, malaria, which threatens the lives of nearly 3.2 billion people in tropical and poor regions of the world, is also a significant threat to the operational readiness of the US military. More person-days were lost among US military personnel due to malaria than to bullets during every military campaign fought in malaria-endemic regions during the 20th century. Thanks to on-going research at DoD, nearly all of the most effective and widely used antimalarials—used to protect our service members overseas and adapted for wide-spread use in endemic regions—were developed in part by US military researchers. The 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa provides another example where DoD research was critical to our servicemen and women fighting the disease alongside local communities. The Department’s quick work to advance the development of Ebola vaccines and treatments during troop deployment to West Africa was vital to the response, and underscores the importance of DoD research for countermeasures to address the many disease threats that may undermine operational effectiveness.

Provisions introduced in the FY17 NDAA threaten to undo vital medical research programs at the Department of Defense and nullify past investments in promising countermeasures for infectious disease and other health challenges. Specifically, Section 898: Improved Transparency and Oversight over Department of Defense Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation Efforts and Procurement Activities Related to Medical Research, enacts restrictions on DoD medical research activities that would

bring nearly every medical research program in the Department to a stand-still. Our coalition urges you to recognize the critical medical research conducted by the DoD and oppose provisions, including Sections 756 and 898 in the FY17 NDAA, that would limit our nation's ability to develop medical countermeasures necessary to protect our troops and save lives around the world.

In our increasingly interconnected world, infectious diseases are a plane ride—or mission deployment—away. Research at DoD yields tremendous dividends for supporting the health and well-being of our troops, saving lives around the world, promoting global growth and development, and ensuring global health security. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and please do not hesitate to contact GHTC Director, Erin Will Morton, at ewmorton@ghtcoalition.org or (202) 822-0033 if you have questions or need any additional information.

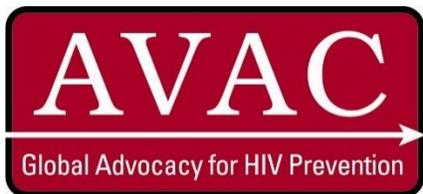
Sincerely,



Aeras



American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene



AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention



Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation



FIND



Global Health Council



HIV Medicine Association



Infectious Diseases Society of America



PATH



Population Council



RESULTS



Sabin Vaccine Institute



Treatment Action Group



TB Alliance



UPMC Center for Health Security



Washington Global Health Alliance

Cc: Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
Members of the Senate Committee on Armed Services