

Statement for the Record
Submitted by Mr. Connolly of Virginia

Alongside climate change and nuclear proliferation, global health security issues are one of the key existential threats facing humanity today. An outbreak in a remote village can spread to major cities on all six continents in less than 36 hours. By 2050, antimicrobial resistance could cost the global economy \$100 trillion and 10 million lives annually. And yet, nearly 70 percent of the world's nations remain underprepared to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks, whether naturally occurring, accidental, or deliberately released. Diseases don't stop at national borders. That is why the promotion of global health security must be a core national security priority for the United States. I have introduced the bipartisan Global Health Security Act (H.R. 2166) with my Republican colleague Rep. Steve Chabot, in order to reaffirm the United States' commitment to promoting global health security.

The Global Health Security Act seeks to address two main issues – that U.S. global health security staffing and activities are largely reliant on an executive order and not specifically supported in law, and that the U.S. needs a permanent designated official responsible for coordinating the interagency response to a global health security emergency. The Global Health Security Act codifies U.S. investments in the ability to prepare for and respond to public health threats and reduce or prevent their spread across borders.

This bill bolsters U.S. commitments under the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), which is a multilateral initiative to build countries' capacity to manage infectious disease threats and elevate health security as a global priority. The United States has committed \$1 billion to support partner countries and strengthen implementation of the International Health Regulations core capacities across eleven technical areas. In October 2017, the United States and nearly 50 other nations agreed to extend GHSA for an additional five years to 2024, in order to continue strengthening our data sharing, preparedness planning, surveillance capacity, risk assessment, and response to biological threats.

During the 2014 Ebola epidemic, President Obama named Ron Klain as his Ebola czar to coordinate the United States' response to the growing health crisis. Klain was successful in developing a plan to track, monitor, treat and control Ebola exposure domestically. However, Tim Zeimer, who was the Senior Director for Global Health Security at the National Security Council for the Trump administration, and the presumptive designee in the case of such an emergency, left the NSC in May 2018 and he has not been replaced. To fill this void, the Global Health Security Act would establish the Special Advisor to the President for Global Health Security on the National Security Council. This individual would be charged with coordinating the federal government's response to a global health crisis.

Republican and Democratic presidents alike have recognized the critical importance of global health security – from President Obama's role in launching the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) to President Trump's National Security Strategy and National Biodefense Strategy. In February 2018, then Director of National Intelligence, Daniel R. Coats, released the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, which said "The increase in frequency and diversity of reported disease

outbreaks—such as dengue and Zika—probably will continue through 2018, including the potential for a severe global health emergency that could lead to major economic and societal disruptions, strain governmental and international resources, and increase calls on the United States for support.”

Heeding this warning, we must ask ourselves: **are we ready for the next crisis?**

Marking the 100th anniversary of the 1918 influenza pandemic that claimed nearly 100 million lives worldwide, National Security Council Director of Medical and Biodefense Preparedness Luciana Borio said that “the threat of pandemic flu is the number one health security concern. Are we ready to respond? I fear the answer is no.” In evaluating the agencies’ respective responses to the 2014 Ebola outbreak, the Inspectors General of both the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of Health and Human Services cited the need for improved interagency coordination in order to save precious time, resources, and lives in the next emergency response. The CSIS Commission on Strengthening America’s Health Security recently released a report titled “Ending the Cycle of Crisis and Complacency in U.S. Global Health Security.” The number one recommendation of this report is to restore health security leadership at the White House National Security Council by naming “a senior-level leader in charge of coordinating U.S. efforts to anticipate, prevent, and respond to biological crises.” Our Global Health Security Act would do just that.

Former Ebola Response Coordinator Ron Klain said of this legislation, “I believe the Global Health Security Act offers some much needed improvements in the way our country prepares for – and potentially responds to – a dangerous epidemic. It builds on the lessons learned from prior incidents, and puts in place a sound structure going forward. Such bipartisan measures are important and should be enacted by the Congress as quickly as possible.”

The Global Health Security Act is endorsed by ChildFund International, Global Health Council, International Medical Corps, IntraHealth International, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, Nuclear Threat Initiative, PATH, the American Society of the Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, Management Sciences for Health (MSH), and The Borgen Project.

Saving lives from the next global pandemic starts with investing in preparedness before it strikes. As we’ve seen time and time again, diseases do not respect borders, and global health crises have immense security, economic, and humanitarian consequences. The Global Health Security Act recognizes the critical role of U.S. leadership in international health security, enshrines U.S. global health security policy in statute, and ensures that there is a permanent designated official responsible for coordinating these efforts in a strategic way.