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Congress of the United States  
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ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

May 15, 2018

John Bolton  
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Bolton:

Marking the 100<sup>th</sup> 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.”

We write to express deep concerns with several recent actions the White House has taken to downgrade the importance of global health security.

In the past week, Rear Admiral Timothy Ziemer, the Senior Director for Global Health Security at the National Security Council (NSC), reportedly left the Administration and his team has been disbanded amidst an NSC reorganization. Ziemer’s departure follows the exit of former White House homeland security advisor Tom Bossert, who also advocated investment in pandemic preparedness. According to reports, Admiral Ziemer’s position will not be filled and there is now no senior administration official focused solely on global health security.

Following this shakeup, NSC spokesman Robert Palladino said the Administration “remains committed to global health, global health security and biodefense, and will continue to address these issues with the same resolve under the new structure.” Yet, the White House recently proposed a rescission of Ebola contingency funds that should be used to counter these pandemic threats. Last week, the World Health Organization declared a new outbreak of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, its second such occurrence in under a year.

As you know, the United States helped to launch the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), which is a five-year 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. Last October, 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.

At this crucial juncture, forcing out some of our nation's most respected leaders on global health security and scaling back our investment in countering pandemic threats sends a dangerous message to our GHSA partner countries that the U.S. no longer considers global health security a priority. Given the fragmented organization of global health security responsibilities throughout the federal government, having a designated official at the White House coordinating the response is critical to an effective operation. We urge you to reconsider the demotion of the global health security portfolio and reject the proposal to rescind Ebola contingency funds. Saving lives from the next global pandemic starts with investing in preparedness before it strikes. We fear these recent decisions will leave the United States vulnerable to pandemics and commit us to a strategy of triage should one occur.

Best Regards,

  
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

  
Dr. Ami Bera  
Member of Congress