

**Testimony Members Day Hearing F2026 – National Security, Department of State, and
Related Programs Appropriations
CONGRESSWOMAN ROBIN KELLY (IL-02)**

Thank you, Chair Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Frankel for the opportunity to have this hearing to discuss with you my priorities for your FY26 State and Foreign Operations funding bill. I am deeply honored to continue the legacy of Representative Barbara Lee and her visionary leadership in advancing PEPFAR's mission.

Since President George W. Bush launched PEPFAR in 2003, Democrats and Republicans have worked together to reauthorize PEPFAR and replenish the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. I am working daily to ensure that communities across the world can access PEPFAR's lifesaving services. Across the globe, there are 3,500 new HIV infections daily. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 3,100 young women and girls are infected with HIV each week. Since 2003, PEPFAR has saved over 26 million lives, preventing millions of HIV infections. The Global Fund has helped save 65 million lives and reduced the combined death rate from AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria by 61% since 2002.

We are just five years away from ending the HIV/AIDS pandemic and transitioning towards country ownership of HIV programs. PEPFAR is a great example of US foreign assistance that makes America safer, stronger and more prosperous. The lives of millions of people depend on this program's continued funding and success. PEPFAR has a proven track record of success in decreasing mortality rates, enhancing maternal and infant health, preserving global health security, and fostering economic growth. Compared to other foreign policy spending, global HIV funding makes up less than 0.1% of U.S. spending. And yet, this spending has substantial impacts for the

U.S. and global community, making it arguably the United States' most successful foreign policy program of all time.

In just one year, PEPFAR provided HIV testing services to 71.1 million individuals and the Global Fund supported 25 million people on antiretroviral therapy for HIV. PEPFAR's Orphans and Vulnerable Children programs show a \$4 return in economic productivity gains for every \$1 spent on programming. The U.S. has always been a leading investor in global HIV programs, and it is easy to see why. This year, we must continue that leadership in order save lives and catalyze investment from other donors. PEPFAR has done more for children than perhaps any other program and must be retained in its current form going forward.

PEPFAR has also played a key role in transforming societies. It has prevented 8.3 million children from becoming orphaned and enabled 7.8 million babies to be born HIV-free. Over the past five years alone it has protected 10.5 million girls from exploitation, trafficking and abuse through screening and preventative services that accelerate HIV prevention. Similarly, the Global Fund invests in the poorest countries and targets the most vulnerable populations, including mothers, adolescent girls and children. In the countries where it invests, the Global Fund provides medications for 84% of all mothers with HIV, keeping them alive and protecting their babies from infection.

We must stay focused on our goal of ending the HIV/AIDS pandemic by 2030. We are facing significant challenges at the start of 2025, however, following the signing of Executive Order 14169. Before President Trump, Elon Musk, and DOGE dismantled USAID and US foreign

assistance, PEPFAR was supporting 20.6 million people, including 566,000 children with HIV. While PEPFAR has received a waiver to restart some life-saving HIV services, many of its activities continue to be suspended indefinitely. The vital socio-economic support given by PEPFAR's Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) programs provided a critical layer of safety to children by ensuring they were able to remain healthy and on treatment if they were HIV positive and if they were not HIV positive, protecting them from becoming infected. Sadly, all of these services are now gone and have not been provided with a waiver by Secretary of State Rubio. Absent an immediate reversal of USAID program terminations, history tells us that many of the millions of children who were dropped from OVC support will soon be found in hazardous labor, swept into sex trafficking, or not alive at all, instead of in school where they belong. For the limited programs that have received a waiver, accessing funding continues to be a challenge. The decimation of the USAID workforce has caused the waiver system to be ineffective. Consequently, NGOs have no other choice than to terminate over half of their staff. Local economies and health care systems are being destroyed.

To lead with data and follow science, we must align our programs with proper response and funds. I urge that the Function 150 Account be funded at the FY24 enacted level of \$60 billion and I urge that PEPFAR be funded at the FY24 enacted level of \$6.5 billion. With \$2 billion allocated to the Global Fund for the first year of this replenishment, the same level we invested at the beginning of the last cycle. This would put the Global Fund on the path to a fully funded replenishment, which is estimated to save 23 million lives, reduce mortality by another 63% and prevent 400 million new infections worldwide. In every PEPFAR authorization Congress has directed 10% of PEPFAR funding be provided to OVC programs. I urge that this Committee disburse 10% of

PEPFAR's bilateral funding for Orphans and Vulnerable children (OVC). Therefore, it is essential that Congress—including this Subcommittee—make clear that funds passed by Congress and signed into law by the President must be disbursed at the level and according to the conditions Congress specifies.

HIV is a constant threat to global health, leaving millions vulnerable to other diseases, and demanding vigilant, steadfast, and fully-funded strategies to end it as a global epidemic. We cannot eradicate this epidemic if we leave communities behind. Nor can we sustain the progress that has already been made unless our partners fulfill their commitments. Yesterday, March 25, 2025, the clock ran out of time and PEPFAR's reauthorization expired. That is why I look forward to working with this committee to reauthorize PEPFAR and continue appropriating essential funding. Thank you for the ongoing support for PEPFAR's and the Global Fund's work.