

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 9, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write to express profound concern that the recent Ebola and hantavirus outbreaks are demonstrating, in real time, the consequences of the Trump Administration's haphazard dismantling of the international public health and humanitarian infrastructure the United States has long relied upon to detect and contain emerging threats.

In a March 12, 2026 letter regarding the United States' withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), many of us warned that dismantling international disease surveillance and coordination mechanisms would leave both the United States and the international community less prepared to respond to infectious disease outbreaks. Those risks are no longer theoretical. The dismantling of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the withdrawal from key international organizations such as the WHO, and the abrupt foreign aid cuts have had the combined effect of degrading our outbreak preparedness and seriously weakening the systems we rely upon to keep Americans safe from infectious diseases.

Specifically, the Trump Administration's withdrawal of global health funding that once supported outbreak detection and surveillance across parts of Africa has led to the erosion of the international disease-monitoring infrastructure relied upon to identify and contain emerging infectious diseases. This erosion has been compounded by the Administration's broader underfunding of global health security and other global health programs, despite bipartisan congressional support for sustained funding for such programs. Health officials now believe the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola virus may have circulated undetected for six to eight weeks before laboratory confirmation, allowing suspected cases and unexplained deaths to spread across multiple health zones in the northeastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), near the Ugandan border.

Public health experts and humanitarian organizations have underscored that surveillance systems built with international assistance often serve multiple functions — including tracking outbreaks, transporting laboratory samples, and monitoring unexplained illnesses in remote regions — and that those networks weakened rapidly when funding was abruptly and baselessly withdrawn. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) previously collaborated with the WHO to maintain a robust disease surveillance system to conduct laboratory testing and monitor the transmission of infectious diseases during major outbreaks. However, the infrastructure and trusted collaboration between organizations no longer exist due to the U.S. withdrawal from the WHO. One potential impact of this decision is that the CDC had not learned about the Ebola outbreak until nine days after the WHO first received alerts about the virus. The current Ebola

outbreak has also resulted in at least 1,000 suspected cases and over 250 suspected deaths, with the number of suspected fatalities reportedly having increased by nearly 30 percent in a single day.

In the regions now at the center of the outbreak, humanitarian organizations were forced to significantly reduce frontline operations following the Administration's funding cuts. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported that, following funding reductions in 2025, it was forced to scale back health and preparedness operations in Ituri Province from five health zones to two. Ituri Province is now the epicenter of the Ebola virus outbreak. IRC officials warned that "funding cuts have left the region dangerously exposed" and stated that surveillance systems were effectively "catching up with transmission that has likely been occurring for some time." Staffing reductions for global health partners and U.S. agencies, and the closure or scaling back of health facilities in affected areas, severely impaired the ability to rapidly identify and contain the outbreak once cases began to emerge.

Following the announcement of the United States' intent to withdraw from the WHO, Argentina announced plans to withdraw from the organization as well. Shortly thereafter, Argentina faced a growing hantavirus outbreak that required international monitoring and coordination. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed hope that Argentina and the United States would see "how important universality is for health security" and reverse course.

Recent reductions in public health preparedness capacity here at home have also weakened our ability to rapidly detect and respond to emerging infectious disease threats. A world-class National Institutes of Health laboratory in Frederick, Maryland, focused on Ebola research, was designed for precisely the kind of outbreak now unfolding in Central Africa. The laboratory would ordinarily be evaluating potential treatments and vaccines and helping researchers better understand the Bundibugyo strain. Instead, the laboratory was shuttered last year, with staff abruptly laid off and critical outbreak-response research halted.

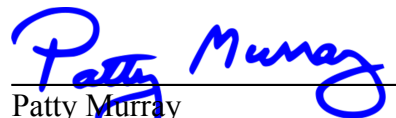
You have recently criticized the WHO for being "a little late" in identifying the current Ebola outbreak. But these outbreaks should prompt serious reflection within the Administration about the consequences of dismantling the very surveillance systems, humanitarian infrastructure, scientific partnerships, and international coordination mechanisms the United States has historically relied upon to detect and contain emerging threats beyond our shores, before they escalate into broader crises that impact us here at home.

We urge the Administration to conduct a serious assessment of the decisions that contributed to the weakening of these capabilities and to immediately reverse course on policies that have left the United States and the international community less prepared to respond to future outbreaks.

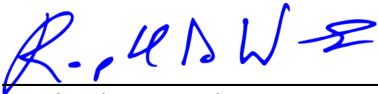
Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



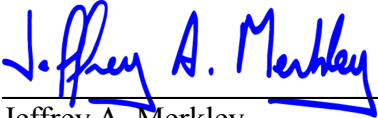
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



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United States Senator



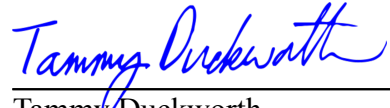
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
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Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



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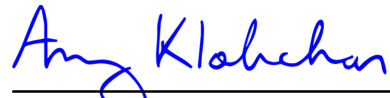
Jacky Rosen
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Richard J. Durbin
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Jack Reed
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



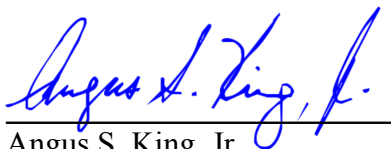
Michael F. Bennet
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Adam B. Schiff
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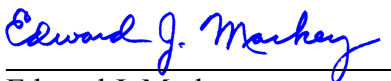
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Ron Wyden
United States Senator



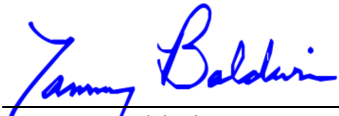
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