

July 10, 2024

The Honorable Christopher Coons, Chair  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and  
Related Programs  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee State, Foreign Operations, and Related  
Programs  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Graham:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to support inclusion of \$10 million for Neglected Surgical Conditions within the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) Appropriations Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. Such investment in global surgical care would transform the lives of millions of children and adults around the world.

Each year, global deaths from conditions requiring surgical care far exceed those from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria – combined.<sup>1</sup> However, the burden of conditions requiring surgical intervention continues to be neglected as a public health strategy. By directing \$10 million through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. can lead the effort to transform health systems in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs), which has the potential to save seventeen million lives per year and avert \$12.3 trillion in lost GDP in LMICs over the next fifteen years. The investment in surgical systems also supports pandemic preparedness plans as the increased capacity can be repurposed for treatment capacity during pandemics.<sup>2</sup>

The World Bank identified essential surgical care as one of the most cost-effective health interventions available and a health priority that is within reach for countries around the world.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution in 2015, co-sponsored by the U.S., that acknowledged surgery and anesthesia as key components to strengthening health systems.<sup>4</sup> As a result, all sixteen member countries of the Southern African Development Community and all twenty-six countries of the Pacific Community are moving ahead to strengthen surgical systems and are developing national strategic plans. In 2020, all thirty-seven countries of the WHO Western Pacific Region unanimously adopted a framework for action for safe and affordable surgery in the region. These LMICs are determined to fill the currently unmet surgical gap of 143 million additional operations by the end of the decade, and the U.S. has an opportunity to lead this global surgery movement.

Language recognizing the importance of strengthening capacity to address neglected surgical conditions was included in the FY 2021 and FY 2022 SFOPS Report. We appreciate your past leadership and support, and urge you to consider the following report language for FY 2025:

***Neglected Surgical Conditions*** – *The agreement includes \$10,000,000 to strengthen surgical health capacity to address such health issues as cleft lip and cleft palate, club foot, cataracts, hernias, fistulas, and untreated traumatic injuries in underserved areas in developing countries, including in contexts without water or electricity. Strengthening surgical health systems includes the training of local surgical teams to provide safe, sustainable, and timely surgical care, and assisting ministries of health to develop and implement national surgical, obstetric, trauma, and anesthesia plans.*

Including the proposed language in the FY 2025 SFOPS Report signifies a strong commitment and investment in global surgical care. Thank you in advance for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Carrie Zlatos with the American College of Surgeons at [czlatos@facs.org](mailto:czlatos@facs.org).

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)60160-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)60160-X/fulltext)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.globalhealthnow.org/2020-09/prepare-pandemics-invest-surgical-care>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/03/26/surgery-could-save-millions-of-lives-in-developing-countries>

<sup>4</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26239773/>

Sincerely,

American College of Surgeons  
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery  
American Association of Neurological Surgeons  
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society  
American Society for Surgery of the Hand Professional Organization  
American Society of Anesthesiologists  
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery  
American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
American Urological Association  
Congress of Neurological Surgeons  
Society for Vascular Surgery  
Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons  
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

Cc: Chair and Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committees on Appropriations, Members of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs