

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Capito and Ranking Member Baldwin:

Thank you for your ongoing support of funding for polio eradication through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Global Immunization Division. We are writing to request that you provide at least \$180 million for this program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) is one of the largest, most successful public private health initiatives ever created. As a result of this global effort, three billion children have been immunized, 20 million have been spared disability, and over 900,000 polio related deaths have been averted. In addition, more than 1.5 million childhood deaths have been prevented thanks to the systematic administration of Vitamin A during polio campaigns.

Since the program's launch in 1988, global polio incidence has been reduced by more than 99 percent. However, outbreaks of variant poliovirus pose an ongoing challenge to under-immunized communities. There were nearly 50 percent fewer such cases in fewer places in 2024 as compared to 2023 and efforts continue to stop these outbreaks.

This funding in FY 2026 would allow the CDC to continue its global leadership in support of GPEI's polio eradication strategy through 2029. The two main goals of the strategy are to permanently interrupt all poliovirus transmission in endemic countries; and to stop transmission of variant poliovirus and to prevent outbreaks in non-endemic countries. This funding would also enable the CDC to build capacity in endemic, outbreak, and at-risk countries to respond to outbreaks in a timely manner through high-quality immunization campaigns. It would also support procurement and delivery of vaccines, including the novel oral polio vaccine to prevent and respond to cases of variant poliovirus. The requested funding would strengthen polio surveillance using tools such as direct detection and surveillance and increase the use of digitization and evidence-based innovations to overcome immunization barriers and strengthen in-country capacity.

Now is the time to complete polio eradication once and for all. The first case of paralytic polio in the United States in decades was confirmed in 2022 along with detections of poliovirus in wastewater in several counties in the state of New York. These were stark reminders that until the world is polio free, all children, even those in the United States, are at risk.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are now the only two countries that have not yet stopped transmission of wild polio. Fewer than one hundred cases were confirmed in 2024 in these endemic countries, where insecurity continues to hamper efforts to reach all children. Africa was certified as being wild poliovirus-free in August 2020 and has maintained that status, despite an importation of wild poliovirus from Pakistan in 2022.

Similar to smallpox eradication, polio eradication is a cost-effective public health investment and could save an estimated \$33.1 billion this century, compared to the cost of merely controlling the virus and responding continuously to outbreaks. Supporting eradication now is an upfront investment in future savings. Furthermore, the physical and human assets developed for polio have bolstered other immunization programs and health systems, improving global and local capacity to respond to public health threats like Measles, Ebola, and Zika. These broad benefits demonstrate the enduring value of our investments in global polio eradication.

Continued U.S. leadership is essential to ensuring we capitalize on this historic opportunity to rid the world of polio and continue protecting Americans from the disease's deadly effects. To continue this tremendous progress, we respectfully request your support for the polio eradication efforts of the CDC in the FY 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

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