

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Chair  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,  
and Related Programs  
Committee on Appropriations  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign  
Operations, and Related Programs  
Committee on Appropriations  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Schatz:

Thank you for your ongoing support of funding for the global polio eradication. We are writing to request that you provide at least \$85 million for this vital work in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs 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, nearly three billion children have been immunized, more than 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.

Funding in FY 2026 would support the GPEI's polio eradication strategy through 2029. The strategy lays out two achievable goals: to permanently interrupt all poliovirus transmission in endemic countries and to stop circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus transmission to prevent outbreaks in non-endemic countries. Funding would also enable the improvement of national and subnational capacity for monitoring poliovirus transmission by expanding surveillance and increasing the number of surveillance medical officers and community-based surveillance officers. Finally, it would also support high-quality immunization and outbreak response campaigns in high-risk and remote areas through targeted, evidence-based innovations to overcome barriers, build community demand for vaccination and strengthen in-country capacity to interrupt polio transmission globally.

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 are stark reminders that until the world is polio free, all children, even those in the United States, will be 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 polio-free in August 2020 and has maintained that status, despite an introduction of wild poliovirus from Pakistan in 2022. However, outbreaks of variant poliovirus pose an ongoing challenge to under-immunized communities. There were nearly 50 percent

fewer such cases located in fewer geographic areas in 2024 as compared to 2023 and GPEI is leading efforts to stop these outbreaks. The time is now to complete polio eradication once and for all.

Similar to smallpox eradication, polio eradication is a cost-effective public health investment. Polio eradication is highly cost-effective 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 Ebola, and Zika. These broad benefits of these programs demonstrate the enduring value of our investment in the GPEI.

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 in the FY 2026 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

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