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Society for Research in Child Development Statement on the U.S. Government Withholding Funding for the World Health Organization

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), an international community of developmental scientists, strongly opposes the decision to withhold U.S. funding to support the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) on behalf of children.

The mission of the WHO is to "promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable." Its work is essential in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting children's healthy development, and forging international cooperation. Its $4.8 billion annual budget represents the largest effort worldwide to improve the healthy development of children, families, and adults. The WHO can be credited with enormous progress over the past 30 years: The WHO has worked tirelessly and successfully to reduce the number of children in the world under age 5 who die each day. The WHO currently focuses on reducing the large disparities that continue, with over 80 percent of these deaths occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and South Asia, even though these regions account for only 52 percent of the global under-5 population. More than half of child deaths are preventable through psychosocial interventions, immunizations, and improvement of health systems.

During this global pandemic, all the world's children are threatened, but the "vulnerable," that is those living in communities where basic nutrition, healthcare, and parental care are not guaranteed, are at urgent risk. The WHO provides support for these children.

As scientists, we are keenly aware of the immediate and long-term detrimental effects of withdrawal of global aid would mean for children's healthy development. The scientific community has discovered effective treatments, solutions, and preventive strategies. Today more than ever, we count on the WHO to deliver these interventions to save children's lives and prevent long-term ill effects of the pandemic. Funding of the WHO supports global access to primary care and children's mental health interventions, and it could prevent the next public health crisis.

At this moment, we should be renewing our commitment to support the WHO's good work instead of withholding funds, in the service of protecting the health and safety of the world's most vulnerable children and families.

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On behalf of the Society for Research in Child Development

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