

# Chairman Kerry Opening Statement At Hearing On Global Health

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) today chaired a hearing exploring the challenges and opportunities in global health.

*Full text of Chairman Kerry's opening statement as prepared is below:*

Today we are very pleased to welcome two of our nation's most important leaders on global health—one a former President of the United States, and the other the CEO and Chairman of one of America's most transformative companies.

Long after their own places in history were secure, both Bill Clinton and Bill Gates made it their passion to write an impressive new chapter in the effort to solve some of the world's most pressing problems.

Fighting HIV/AIDS has long been at the top of that list. And during a polarizing era in America's politics, it has been the kind of bipartisan success story that defines our democracy at its best. Back in 1999 and 2000, I was pleased to work with Jesse Helms, Bill Frist, and many partners from both sides of the aisle to pass comprehensive HIV/AIDS legislation that laid the foundation for PEPFAR.

Today, thanks to these programs, over 2.4 million people are receiving life-saving treatment and nearly 350,000 babies of HIV-positive mothers have been born HIV-free. That's not enough—but it does represent a remarkable achievement.

What's more, we have made great strides against malaria. This, in turn, has cut childhood mortality in some areas by as much as one third. And the Global Fund, where every American dollar is matched twice over, has helped to prevent millions of deaths across 140 countries.

But as long as so many lives remain at risk, we cannot rest on past accomplishments. As the Administration finalizes its new Global Health Initiative, we must ask ourselves: Where should we go from here? How can we build on success?

The Global Health Initiative has rightly identified several core principles that should guide our thinking:

First, health systems are more than the sum of their parts. Even as we expand our fight against HIV/AIDS, we have to look beyond the vertical silo of any single disease.

Second, a holistic approach leads us to focus on the women and girls who are at the center of each family's health, but are too often marginalized by their economies and health systems. This includes taking on maternal mortality, which robs families of half a million young mothers every year.

And third, because we seek to empower other countries to eventually assume full responsibility for the care of their own citizens, we must recognize their priorities and the importance of building local capacity.

These principles informed the strong bipartisan message of the Lantos-Hyde PEPFAR Reauthorization bill of 2008. And I hope they will provide the underpinnings for strong bipartisan support going forward for advancing global health and strengthening the fight against HIV/AIDS.

My wife Teresa and I saw firsthand the most courageous and frustrating realities of this struggle when we visited the Umgeni Primary School near Durban, South Africa in late 2007. We saw caregivers who devote their lives to helping the region's AIDS orphans; children left with no choice but to assume adult responsibilities at a tender age; and single mothers scratching out subsistence in mud houses, their husbands lost to a horrific disease. We saw the crushing economic impact of poor health—which underscores why improving health lays the foundation for better economic development across the board.

Clearly, our fight against HIV/AIDS is far from over. But we also have new challenges. Already, as our climate changes and mosquitoes expand their range, malaria is surging in areas that have hardly ever seen it before, like the Kenyan Highlands. We must ask ourselves: are we doing enough to prepare for the health challenges that climate change may bring on a massive scale?

And we in Congress must answer another crucial question: is this an investment we can afford? In an interconnected world where drug-resistant tuberculosis could be on the next plane landing at Dulles, the answer—emphatically—is that we can't afford not to invest in these programs. A strong global public health system is not merely a favor we do for other countries. It is the right thing to do morally and strategically, and it protects our own citizens.

In fact, such a remarkably effective bipartisan effort is precisely the kind of program that is worth defending in a budgetary environment where there is pressure to simply slash our investments in the world.

To make each tax dollar go further, we must also leverage our government's contribution into greater cooperation from the private sector. And it is no exaggeration to say that the Clinton and Gates Foundations have revolutionized the public-private partnership. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has invested billions of dollars in support of HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, vaccines, and a host of other health challenges. The Clinton Foundation has done groundbreaking work negotiating down drug prices globally for life-saving medications—and pioneered projects that transcend the artificial boundaries between health and development.

Our guests today, Bill Clinton and Bill Gates, need no further introduction. I look forward to a lively discussion with two of the great innovative thinkers in America today, and I thank them for coming to brief the Committee. Senator Lugar.

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