November 30, 2017

Anthony Fauci, MD  
Director  
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases 
BG 31 RM 7A03  
31 Center Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Carl Dieffenbach, PhD  
Director  
Division of AIDS 
BG 5601FL RM 8D33  
5601 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Drs. Fauci and Dieffenbach,

The undersigned 93 organizations and 175 individuals committed to women’s sexual health and reproductive justice are deeply concerned that the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) intends to end its investment in microbicides research and development. We strongly urge NIAID to maintain its expressed commitment to developing technologies that help both cisgender and transgender women meet their HIV prevention needs, and continue to prioritize topical microbicide development alongside other prevention modalities. The advent of safe and effective microbicides, products that could be applied vaginally or rectally to reduce sexual acquisition of HIV, would enable women to better protect themselves against HIV. Despite the critical role microbicides could play in women’s sexual health and autonomy, NIAID has indicated that it will direct its investment only to long-acting systemic prevention products such as implants, injectables, and vaccines.

Microbicides are particularly needed to reduce new HIV infections among women. UNAIDS data estimates that women comprised 47 percent of new HIV diagnoses among adults globally in 2015. Women represent more than half of all people living with HIV worldwide, and account for 60 percent of those with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. Younger women are especially vulnerable. Nearly 1,000 young women ages 15-24 newly acquire HIV in Africa every day. These numbers are expected to increase. In the U.S., Black and Latina cisgender and transgender women continue to be disproportionately impacted by HIV. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women make up 61 percent of all women diagnosed with HIV in the U.S., a rate that is 16 times higher than that of White women and nearly five times that of Latinas. Transgender women of color are hit particularly hard, with some of the highest HIV prevalence rates overall. In addition to the numerous social and structural factors that contribute to women’s HIV vulnerability, such as inadequate access to health care, discriminatory policies,
poverty, unstable housing, violence, and trauma, too few women-controlled HIV prevention options exist.

The development of varied HIV prevention options is especially important for women. Women require prevention modalities that meet the diverse needs, contexts, and desires that occur across the lifespan. For example, the needs of sexually active young women who want to prevent pregnancy differ from women who want to bear children, are pregnant or breastfeeding, or who engage in anal intercourse. Women of all ages, and at all times within their lives, deserve the ability to protect themselves against HIV. Microbicide research and development is based on the notion that one size does not and cannot fit all, and thus it is critical that it continues.

The microbicide field has made substantial gains in the last decade, which may be for naught should the NIH divest from further development. The most significant of these achievements is the monthly dapivirine vaginal ring, now under regulatory review with additional submissions being planned. If approved, the dapivirine ring would be the first microbicide and first biomedical HIV prevention product specifically for women – and also the first long-acting product. This is only the beginning. The vaginal microbicide field currently boasts more than 10 candidate products in various stages of development, including multi-purpose technologies (MPTs) that in addition to protecting against HIV, could protect against other STIs, such as HSV-2, and/or prevent unintended pregnancy. Women across the globe state time and time again that they want and need products like these to reduce acquisition of HIV and STIs as well as to determine if and when to become pregnant.

Directing all resources to only vaccines and long-acting and systemic HIV prevention options such as long-acting injectables would ignore what women who are vulnerable to HIV have clearly articulated needing -- more, not fewer options to meet different times and contexts over the course of their lifespan, including contraception, conception, pregnancy, and breastfeeding. The family planning field has demonstrated time and time again that providing women with a variety of methods to meet their needs and preferences results in greater product use and satisfaction and fewer unintended pregnancies. This same principle is applicable to the field of HIV prevention. Now is not the time to stop. Microbicides research, including of MPTs, must continue to ensure research advancements made in the field are not lost.

Refocusing the prevention research agenda solely on vaccines and long-acting systemic products at the cost of further development of microbicides is also scientifically short-sighted, especially as injectable formulations under study have not yet proven effective. It will also require researchers to redirect their efforts, which could result in losing the scientific expertise that may not be easily regained. It could also result in serious public health consequences. The redirection contradicts NIAID’s claims that developing tailored, safe, effective, and desirable prevention tools to meet people’s diverse prevention needs and contexts is a top priority.

Early treatment, viral load suppression, and oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) are exciting interventions to reduce HIV acquisition. In order to ensure that women who are vulnerable to HIV have options that suit their needs, all prevention avenues should be pursued—vaccines, long-
acting systemic products (such as injectables and implants), as well as microbicides—topical short-acting and long-acting (yet reversible) on-demand products. NIAID’s ongoing investment in developing safe, effective, acceptable, and accessible microbicides that fit all women’s lives is essential to achieving an end to the HIV epidemic.

Sincerely,

U.S. Organizations
AIDS Alabama, Birmingham, AL
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families, Washington, DC
AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Chicago, IL
AVAC, New York, NY
Bailey House, Inc., New York, NY
Black Women’s Health Imperative, Washington, DC
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center, New York, NY
CAMI Health, Folsom, CA
Caribbean Women’s Health Association, Inc., Brooklyn, NY
Cascade AIDS Project, Portland, OR
Center for Black Equity, Washington, DC
Cervical Barrier Advancement Society, Cambridge, MA
Chicago Recovery Alliance, Chicago, IL
Chicago Women’s AIDS Project, Chicago, IL
Colorado Organizations and Individuals Responding to HIV/AIDS, Boulder, CO
Church Ladies for Choice of New York City, New York, NY
Diaspora Community Services, Brooklyn, NY
Emerging Infectious Diseases Panel American Academy of Nursing, Chicago, IL
Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), Sterling Heights, MI
HealthHIV, Washington, DC
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance, Chicago, IL
HIVE, San Francisco, CA
HMM, Fort Wayne, IN
HIV Modernization Movement-Indiana, Indianapolis, IN
Housing Works, New York, NY
Howard Brown Health, Chicago, IL
Ibis Reproductive Health, Cambridge, MA
IKnowAwareness, Atlanta, GA
Illinois Public Health Association, Springfield, IL
International Partnership for Microbicides, Silver Spring, MD
International Women’s Health Coalition, New York, NY
IRMA, Chicago, IL
Jacobs Institute of Women’s Health, Washington, DC
Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center, Inc., Arverne, NY
Legal Council for Health Justice, Oak Park, IL
MashUp! Nashville & Street Works Incorporated, Nashville, TN
National Coalition for LGBT Health, Washington, DC
National Council of Jewish Women, Washington, DC
National Female Condom Coalition, Chicago, IL
National Network of Abortion Funds, Washington, DC
National Women’s Health Network, Washington, DC
NMAC, Washington, DC
PATH, Washington, DC
Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative, Chicago, IL
Planned Parenthood of Illinois, Chicago, IL
Planned Parenthood of New York City, New York, NY
Positive Women’s Network-USA-Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA
Positive Women’s Network-USA-Colorado, Boulder, CO
Positive Women’s Network-USA, Oakland, CA
PowerSource Tucson, Inc., Tucson, AZ
Poz Haven Foundation, Denver, CO
Project Inform, San Francisco, CA
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), Washington, DC
Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative, Durham, NC
Silver Creek Strategies, Novelty, OH
SisterLove, Inc., Atlanta, GA
Test Positive Aware Network, Chicago, IL
The AIDS Institute, Washington, DC
The Center for HIV Law and Policy, New York, NY
The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF), Oakland, CA
The Well Project, Brooklyn, NY
Treatment Action Group, New York, NY
UCHAPS, Washington, DC
Universal Condom Work Group, Los Angeles, CA
Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases (WORLD), Oakland, CA

Non-U.S. Organizations
AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA), Windhoek, Namibia
Asociación Bienestar y Desarrollo, Barcelona, Spain
Asociación Sare, Pamplona, Spain
Center for AIDS Policy Studies and Research Child Foundation of India, Visakhapatnam, India
Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights, Ghana (CEPEHRG), Accra, Ghana
Centre for the Development of People, Lilongwe, Malawi
Centre for HIV Prevention Advocacy, Kisii, Kenya
Centre Stage Media Arts Foundation Zimbabwe, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Grupo de Trabajo sobre Tratamientos del VIH (gTt-VIH), Barcelona, Spain
ICASO, Toronto, Canada
Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development (ICAD), Niagara Falls, Canada
International Community of Women living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA), Kampala, Uganda
Lambda, Valencia, Spain
Makerere University Johns Hopkins University (MU-JHU), Kampala, Uganda
Masaka KP HIV Prevention and Support Organization, Kampala, Uganda
Mouvement Français pour le Planning Familial, Paris, France
Ngo Hygie-Enwerem Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria
Nyanza Reproductive Health Society, Kisumu, Kenya
Pan African Positive Women’s Coalition-Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
Pangaea Zimbabwe AIDS Trust (PZAT), Harare, Zimbabwe
Peer to Peer Uganda, Kampala, Uganda
PINA, Kampala, Uganda
PositiveLite.com, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Real Opportunities Network, Accra, Ghana
STOP SIDA Consell de Cent, Barcelona, Spain
Support On AIDS and Life Through Telephone Helpline (SALT), Kampala, Uganda
Thailand National CAB, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Tororo Forum for People Living with HIV Networks, Eastern Region, Uganda
Treatment Advocacy and Literacy Campaign, Lusaka, Zambia
Salamander Trust, Welbourn, Great Britain

Individuals
Abigail Bartus, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Aditi Sharma, New Delhi, India
Aisha Nassozi, Kampala, Uganda
Alexandra Salazar, Guayaquil, Ecuador
Alexandria Murphy, Schwenksville, PA, United States
Alicia Diggs, Greensboro, NC, United States
Alisa Goldberg, Boston, MA, United States
Alyssa Colwill, Portland, OR, United States
Amy Allina, Washington, DC, United States
Angel Ntege, Kampala, Uganda
Anisha Gandhi, New York, NY, United States
Annet Davis, Philadelphia, PA, United States
Anna Forbes, Kensington, MD, United States
Anne Peace Baguma, Kampala, Uganda
Antony Kugonza, Kampala, Uganda
Ariana Katz, Los Angeles, CA, United States
Arrate Agirrezabal, Mendaro, Spain
Atuhurira Adrinah, Kampala, Uganda
Barb Cardell, Boulder, CO, United States
Barbara Delgado, Panama Ciudad, Panama
Barbara Shacklett, Davis, CA, United States
Beatrice Chen, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Bethany Young Holt, Folsom, CA, United States
Bill Pier, Tucson, AZ, United States
Bindiya Patel, Seattle, WA, United States
Brenda Wolfe, Chicago, IL, United States
Brian Gabriel, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Brian Minalga, Seattle, WA, United States
Bridget Jjuuko, Kampala, Uganda
Caitlyn Copp-Millward, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Carol Sprinkle, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Carolina Herrera, London, United Kingdom
Carrie Foote, Indianapolis, IN, United States
Catherine Chappell, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Charity Twikirize, Kampala, Uganda
Charlene Dezzutti, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Charles Chasakara, Harare, Zimbabwe
Charlotte Usher, Hazleton, PA, United States
Clare Collins, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Craig Hendrix, Baltimore, MD, United States
Dana Rosenfeld, Shrewsbury, United Kingdom
David Peyró, Valencia, Spain
Deborah Kulabako, Kampala, Uganda
DeMarcus Jones, Memphis, TN, United States
Demetre Daskalakis, Queens, NY, United States
Devin Barrington-Ward, Washington, DC, United States
Diana Bridget Ndagire, Kampala, Uganda
Dionne Best, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Dorica Mbewe, Johannesburg, South Africa
Drucilla Nambalirwa, Kampala, Uganda
Edward Livant, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Elaine Stephens, Montevallo, AL, United States
Elizabeth Alarcon, Santiago, Chile
Elizabeth Kelvin, New York, NY, United States
Elizabeth Korasare, Accra, Ghana
Elvira Mendez-Souto, Elche, Spain
Emma Mairson, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Erica Reichert, Franklin, IN, United States
Eunice Marshall, Houston, TX, United States
Fiona Nakiyingi, Kampala, Uganda
Flaviah Namuwaya, Kampala, Uganda
George Ayala, Oakland, CA, United States
Grace Wudu, Kampala, Uganda
Greer Schoeman, Cape Town, South Africa
Guhirwa Racheal, Kampala, Uganda
Hala Fawal, Birmingham, AL, United States
Hanna Morris, Berkeley, CA, United States
Heather Minges Wols, Chicago, IL, United States
Henry Gabelnick, Lusby, MD, United States
Jackie Thaney, Chicago, IL, United States
Jacque Wambui, Nairobi, Kenya
Jaime Martin, Long Island City, NY, United States
Jen Balkus, Seattle, WA, United States
Jessica Tarleton, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Jessica Terlikowski, Portland, OR, United States
Jim Pickett, Chicago, IL, United States
Joanita Wudu, Kampala, Uganda
Joanne Mantell, New York, NY, United States
Jonathan Lucas, Greensboro, NC, United States
Jontraye Davis, Durham, NC, United States
Joseph Ssemanda, Kampala, Uganda
Josephine Ayankoya, Oakland, CA, United States
Jose Carlos Higueras, Sevilla, Spain
Judith Mthethwa, Johannesburg, South Africa
Judy Manning, Marathon, FL, United States
Julie Hehman, Sewickley, PA, United States
Julie Patterson, Novelty, OH, United States
Karishma Oza, San Francisco, CA, United States
Katharine Kripke, Washington, DC, United States
Katharine Bagshaw, Washington, DC, United States
Kate Alexander, Niagara Falls, Canada
Kate Guthrie, Pawtucket, RI, United States
Katie Schwartz, Enosburg Falls, VT, United States
Katie West Slevin, Washington, DC, United States
Kathleen Griffith, Metamora, IL, United States
Kathleen MacQueen, Chapel Hill, NC, United States
Kay Marshall, New York, NY, United States
Kenneth Mayer, Boston, MA, United States
Kenneth Ngure, Nairobi, Kenya
Kenya Hutton, Washington, DC, United States
Kiranda Kizito, Kampala, Uganda
Krista Martel, Brooklyn, NY, United States
Kristyn Brandi, Los Angeles, CA, United States
Larry Baxter, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
Laurel Sprague, Sterling Heights, MI, United States
Laurie Priddy, Crawford, CO, United States
Linnis Cook, Doraville, GA, United States
Lisa Haddad, Atlanta, GA, United States
Lisa Holderman, Silver Lake, IN, United States
Lisa Noguchi, Washington, DC, United States
Lisa Rossi, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Liz Montgomery, Los Angeles, CA, United States
Lourence Misedah, Houston, TX, United States
Love Rachel Nadiope, Kampala, Uganda
Manju Chatani, Northampton, MA, United States
Marc-André LeBlanc, Gatineau, Quebec, Canada
Marla Francisco, Urbana, IL, United States
Marta Villar, Barcelona, Spain
Martez Smith, Rochester, NY, United States
Maureen Luba, Lilongwe, Malawi
Melissa Byrne, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Michele Andrasik, Seattle, WA, United States
Meredith Rowan, Indianapolis, IN, United States
Michelle Harris, Fort Wayne, IN, United States
Michele Lanham, Durham, NC, United States
Miguel Aguero, Washington, DC, United States
Milly Katana, Kampala, Uganda
Mitchell Creinin, Sacramento, CA, United States
Mitchell Warren, New York, NY, United States
Moses Supercharger, Uganda, Kampala
Nannyiti Mariam, Kampala, Uganda
Nonkululeko Mayisela, Johannesburg, South Africa
Noaa Shimoni, Fair Lawn, NJ, United States
Noah Rindos, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Nyaradzo Mgodi, Harare, Zimbabwe
Patricia LiWang, Merced, CA, United States
Paul Causey, Bangkok, Thailand
Peter Mogere, Nairobi, Kenya
Phaleda Kumwenda, Lilongwe, Malawi
Polly Harrison, Washington, DC, United States
Portia Duma, Johannesburg, South Africa
Promise Duma, Johannesburg, South Africa
Prossy Tendo Babirye, Kampala, Uganda
Rayna Brown, Chicago, IL, United States
Rebecca Nabbosa, Kampala, Uganda
Rebekah Webb, Dorchester, United Kingdom
Richard Beigi, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Rita Nakalaga, Kampala, Uganda
Rob Camp, New York, NY, United States
Robyn Schickler, Pasadena, CA, United States
Ronald Veazey, Covington, LA, United States
Rosalind Coleman, Prevessin, France
Ruth Nahurira, Kampala, Uganda
Sarah Solier, Córdoba, Spain
Sarah Roberts, Oakland, CA, United States
Sarah Steimer, Sacramento, CA, United States
Sharifah Kyomukama Nalugo, Kampala, Uganda
Sharon Achilles, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
Sharon Wudu, Kampala, Uganda
Shayna Buhler, Ontario, Canada
Shira Saperstein, Takoma Park, MD, United States
Silvia Gomez, Barcelona, Spain
Shyronn Jones, Atlanta, GA, United States
Stephanie Sober, Philadelphia, PA, United States
Surajkumar Madoori, Arlington, VA, United States
Sybil Hosek, Chicago, IL, United States
Sylvia Nakalanzi, Kampala, Uganda
Telmo Vasquez, San Francisco, CA, United States
Teresa Sullivan, Philadelphia, PA, United States
Thembisile Mogodiri, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tonny Muzira, Kampala, Uganda
Udom Likhitwonnavut, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Victoria Hoverman, Gaithersburg, MD, United States
Winifred Usher, Hazleton, PA, United States
Zoe Duby, Cape Town, South Africa