

# Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

November 27, 2017

Anthony S. Fauci, M.D.,  
Director  
National Institute of Allergy and  
Infectious Diseases,  
National Institutes of Health  
31 Center Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Carl W. Dieffenbach, Ph.D.,  
Director of the Division of AIDS,  
National Institute of Allergy and  
Infectious Diseases  
National Institutes of Health  
5601 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Drs. Fauci and Dieffenbach:

As the National Institutes of Health (NIH) embarks on its cyclical review of U.S. and international HIV clinical research networks, we strongly urge you to continue the commitment to expanding HIV prevention options and to maintain investment in topical microbicide development. Without funding from the NIH, the future of research and development of topical, on-demand, short-acting, non-systemic HIV prevention options is very bleak.

Prioritizing microbicide research is in line with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease's goal of developing tailored, safe, effective, and desirable prevention tools to meet people's diverse prevention needs. While vaccines and long-acting systemic products have shown promise, topical on-demand products like microbicides are essential to ensure that people who are vulnerable to HIV have options that meet their needs. All prevention avenues should be pursued—vaccines, long-acting systemic products such as injectables and implants, and topical on-demand products such as microbicides.

The microbicide field has made substantial progress as a result of concerted U.S. investment and leadership in product research and development. Now is the time to continue that investment and leadership. The dapivirine vaginal ring is already under regulatory review and is being developed further for multiple indications to prevent other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well as unintended pregnancy. Additional formulations that will help women and men reduce HIV acquisition risk are also currently being developed, including a variety of behaviorally congruent methods.

We thank the NIH for investing in multi-purpose technologies (MPTs). Such investment is an important step forward and we urge you to sustain both funding for MPTs and microbicides so as not to lose critical gains made to date that will result in reversing the trajectory of microbicides. People across the globe, including vulnerable communities in the United States, desperately want and need such products in order to be in greater control of their sexual and reproductive health. Early phase trials are already underway on MPTs. People who are susceptible to HIV have

expressed needing more, not fewer options, to meet a variety of prevention needs, desires, and contexts across their lifespan. In addition, divestment risks losing the accumulated scientific expertise embodied in the many scientists who will necessarily have to change their research focus – that cannot easily be regained in the future should reinvestment be made.

The HIV prevention research field has experienced substantial advancements in the last decade, placing us ever closer to getting to zero new infections. However, even with treatment options like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), additional modalities are needed to ensure people who are vulnerable to HIV have the option that best suits their needs over their lifespan. If we are to end the HIV epidemic, an array of prevention options, including safe, effective, acceptable, and accessible microbicides must remain a priority at NIH.

Thank you for your extraordinary leadership in the fight against HIV, including supporting a robust prevention research agenda. Again, we urge you to prioritize microbicide research and development in a sustained, adequately, and appropriately funded manner.

Sincerely,



JAN SCHAKOWSKY  
Member of Congress



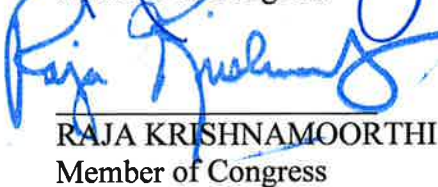
BARBARA LEE  
Member of Congress



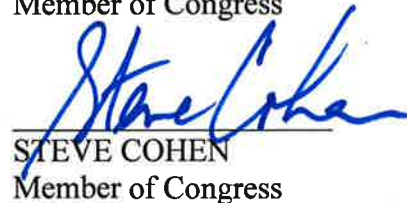
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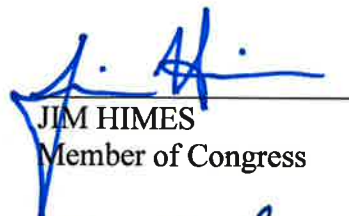
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