July 27, 2018

US Mission to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Honorable Ambassador Haley,

As an organization representing public health professionals working on the frontlines of the tuberculosis (TB) epidemic throughout the United States, we write to call your attention to the challenges we confront here in the United States as we work to eliminate TB. The upcoming United Nations High Level Meeting on Ending Tuberculosis (UN-HLM) presents a unique opportunity to illustrate the vital leadership role the United States can assume in TB elimination efforts—both globally and domestically. Specifically, we request the United States to utilize this opportunity to urge other U.N. member states to make decisive commitments to end TB, not only by sharing the United States experience as the largest donor to TB programs and TB research and development (R&D) globally, but also by recognizing that the United States is a country with its significant share of TB challenges.

TB is an airborne, infectious disease. Every state and US territory reports cases of TB annually, and TB outbreaks continue to occur across the country in schools, workplaces, prisons, healthcare facilities, and other congregate settings. In 2017, there were 9,093 active TB cases reported in the United States. Despite the efforts of public health TB programs, the rate of decline of new TB cases has slowed in recent years, revealing a plateau in our progress to eliminate the disease domestically. Complicating the slowed rate of decline of TB cases, in 2017, 22 states reported an increase in the number of individuals diagnosed with TB. New York City reported the first increase in TB cases since the 1990s when there was a resurgence of TB. In addition, an estimated 13 million individuals in the United States have latent TB infection (LTBI)—an inactive form of the disease where individuals do not show any symptoms but are at higher risk of becoming ill with TB in the future.

While the United States is considered to have a low incidence of TB relative to other nations, continued challenges related to inadequate funding, inadequate public health programmatic capacity, and slow progress in research limit our potential to completely eliminate TB from within US borders. In addition, many of the challenges for TB elimination efforts globally are also challenges confronted in the United States, including: the need for more robust and refined surveillance systems, especially for tracking LTBI; an integrated data system linking public health program records with electronic health records (EHRs); the critical shortage of quality TB nurse care and case management; ongoing TB drug stockouts and supply interruptions; and the lack of a commitment at the highest levels to focus on prevention of TB by treating those with LTBI who are at the greatest risk of advancing to disease and transmitting TB to others.
Of great concern is the proliferation of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) with an estimated 490,000 cases of MDR-TB reported globally in 2016. The emergence of drug-resistant forms of TB poses a particular challenge to TB elimination in the United States due to the high costs of treatment and intensive healthcare resources required. Treatment costs for MDR-TB range from $160,000 to $500,000 per case and upwards of $1 million to treat a single case of extensively drug-resistant (XDR) TB. These costs often come directly at the expense of scarce public health resources and can outstrip state and local public health department budgets. Between 2005 and 2016, the United States had 1,292 cases of MDR-TB and 32 cases of XDR-TB. As the diagnostics for TB improve and we learn more about drug resistance, it is apparent that we have been underestimating the burden of MDR TB and will need additional resources to effectively fight drug resistance, both globally and here in the United States.

The US government has recognized the need to address the growing issue of MDR-TB through the release of the National Action Plan to Combat MDR-TB (NAP) in 2015. Improving international capacity and collaboration under US leadership to address global TB remains critical; however the United States is also in a position to strengthen its national programs to eliminate TB within its borders by fully implementing the NAP. As the US Permanent Mission to the UN prepares for the UN-HLM and engages in negotiations around the resulting political declaration, we want to make you aware of the following steps we believe are essential to illustrate the commitment of our government in addressing its own TB epidemic:

- Funding for the domestic TB response led by the Division of TB Elimination (DTBE) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been flat since 2012. Urge Congress to increase the budget of the flat-funded DTBE from $142.2 million to $195.7 million in fiscal year 2019 appropriations.
- 13 million individuals with LTBI in the United States are currently a potential source for new, active disease, yet not enough resources are available to support and expand prevention. Support the CDC in implementing a Prevention Initiative to intensify efforts to diagnose and treat LTBI among those highest at risk to transition to active TB, which includes scaling up testing, improving linkage to care, and implementing shorter treatment options developed through US-funded research. Such an initiative would get our nation closer to eliminating TB.
- Frequent drug stockouts, supply disruptions, and high costs of scarce TB drugs complicate efforts to contain and address outbreaks swiftly. Adequate strategies, such as centralizing procurement to enhance market stabilization and lower prices of public health tools vital to the work of TB controllers, are needed to mitigate these ongoing issues.
- The plethora of antiquated TB diagnostics, treatments, vaccines and other tools limits our capacity to confront the rise of drug-resistant TB and attain TB elimination in the United States Protect and expand US investments in TB R&D across several key agencies involved in basic sciences, regulation and implementation including the CDC, National Institutes of Health, US Agency for International Development, National Science Foundation, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Defense, and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority.
- The outlook of TB elimination efforts in the United States requires a demonstrated, bipartisan, political commitment from Congress to ensure we are well prepared and positioned to respond to the evolving epidemic. Authorize the Comprehensive TB Elimination Act (H.R. 5794 and S.2567) to support the future public health work of TB controllers and expand US research in the areas of LTBI and pediatric TB.

We, the undersigned members of the US TB community that works within our nation’s communities every day to combat this disease, strongly encourage you to take these issues forward into the UN-HLM. Due to
the ease and availability of worldwide travel, the global and domestic TB epidemics are indelibly linked. Elimination of TB domestically will require global TB elimination and the United States can set an example for other countries to follow. The United States is well-positioned to take the lead in creating the models that will be necessary for TB elimination. However, to achieve this ambitious vision, the United States must address the above critical issues related to funding, policy, programs, and research. The US government must also use its leadership in TB elimination to urge other governments to make similar commitments in resources and political will. The TB public health community is grateful for your leadership, your representation and your commitment to the health of the United States at this historic meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

National Tuberculosis Controllers Association (NTCA)
Smyrna, Georgia

California Tuberculosis Controllers Association (CTCA)
San Francisco, California

Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)
Silver Spring, Maryland

Lisa Adams, MD, Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, Norwich, VT
Felice Adler, MD, CHOC Children’s, Orange, CA
Yossef Aelony, MD, FACP, FCCP, City of Long Beach, Long Beach, CA
Rocio Agraz-Lara, MSN, BS, City and County of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
Shama Ahuja, PhD, MPH, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York City, NY
Myra Allen, BSN, RN, North Carolina TB Control Unit, Washington, NC
Wanda Allred, ADN, Mississippi Department of Health, Jackson, MS
Mohan Amlani, MD, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Silver Spring, MD
Patricia Apolinaro, MD, San Joaquin General Hospital, French Camp, CA
Kathryn Arden, MD, MHA, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Charleston, SC
Stephanie Atella, MPH, Chicago, IL
Marlene Ayers, LVN, Kings County Department of Public Health, Hanford, CA
Beth Baker, RT (R) (M), GNR Health Services TB Prevention, Lawrenceville, GA
Carolyn Bargman, RN-C, MA, Denver Metro TB Program, Denver, CO
Tricia Barish, RN, BS-Ed, Bucks County Department of Health, Levittown, PA
Anita Barkin, DrPH, North Central Health District, Macon, GA
Nancy Baruch, RN, MS, MBA, National Tuberculosis Controllers Association, Baltimore, MD
Allen Bateman, PhD, MPH, Madison, WI
Dorothy Baynham, BA, Tennessee Department of Health Laboratory Services, Nashville, TN
Leanne Beavers, BSN, Summit County Public Health, Akron, OH
Heidi Behm, RN, MPH, TB Program, Oregon Health Authority, Portland, OR
Robert Belknap, MD, Denver Metro TB Program, Denver, CO
Susan Bennettt, RN, BSN, La Crosse County Health Department, La Crosse, WI
John Bernardo, MD, Boston University, Boston, MA
Thomas Bertrand, MPH, Rhode Island Department of Health, Providence, RI
Juanita Bielenberg, ADN, Jo Daviess County Health Department, Galena, IL
Otto Boneta, MD, MPH, McAllen, TX
Harriet Boone, BSN,RN, Public Health Tuberculosis Program, Anchorage, AK
Ronald Boone, BA, Georgia Department of Public Health, Social Circle, GA
Ashley Boyce, BBA, ADN, Decatur, GA
Jennifer Brown, RN, PHN, MSN, Arcata, CA
James Brust, MD, Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, NY
Joseph Burzynski, MD, MPH, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York, NY
Genevieve Buser, MDCM MSHP, Portland, OR
Angie Butters, RN, BSN, PHN, Sacramento County Public Health, Sacramento, CA
James Byrd, MSED, Egyptian Health Department, Eldorado, IL
Midia Fulano, RN, BSN, MBA, MPH, Marion County Public Health Department, Indianapolis, IN
Maureen Gallagher, RN, BSN, MSN, CLNC, Chester County Health Department, West Chester, PA
Richard Garfein, PhD, MPH, San Diego, CA
Diana Gaviria, MD, MPH, Washington County Health Department, Hagerstown, MD
Michael Gilbert, MD, Randall Children's Hospital, Portland, OR
Colleen Goessling, LPN, Monroe County Health Department, Waterloo, IL
Lisa Gonzalez, MPH, DeKalb County Health Department, DeKalb, IL
Angela Goodbody, BSN, MSN, State of Hawaii Department of Health, Honolulu, HI
Julia Greenleaf, RN, MPH, Madison, WI
Phil Griffin, BBA, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Topeka, KS
Annette Guerrero, MD, Los Angeles County Health Department, Whittier, CA
Geeta Gupta, MD, University of California, Orange, CA
Elizabeth Guy, MD, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX
Michelle Haas, MD, Denver Metro Tuberculosis Program, Denver, CO
Judith Hahn, PhD, MA, University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
Rachael Hahn, MPH, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Jefferson City, MO
Heather Hall, MSN, RN, Public Health - Dayton and Montgomery County, Dayton, OH
Amy Haman, BSN, RN, Columbus Public Health, Columbus, OH
Susan Hamilton, RN, MSN, (R), Saint Louis, MO
Louise Harriel, LPN, Gwinnett Health Department, Lawrenceville, GA
Steven Harris, MD, MSc, Florida Department of Health, Tallahassee, FL
Grace Hassid, MD, San Mateo Medical Center, San Mateo, CA
Mareta Hauma, RN, Ebeye, Kwajalein Atoll, MH
Craig Hendrix, MD, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Anne Hersch, RN,BAN, Fargo, ND
Scott Heyssell, MD, MPH, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
Mara Hildebrand, BSN, RN, Coles County Health Department, Charleston, IL
Anna Hippchen, DNP, BSN, The Miriam Hospital, RISE Tuberculosis Clinic, Providence, RI
Deborah Holmes, MD, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Miami, FL
Gregory Holzman, MD, MPH, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Helena, MT
C. Robert Horsburgh, Jr., MD, MUS, Boston University, Boston, MA
Debra Howenstine, MD, Columbia/Boone County Department of Health and Human Services, Columbia, MO
Michelle Huang, AS, TB Control, San Francisco Department of Public Health, San Francisco, CA
Tyson Hurst, BSN, RN, Summit County Public Health, Akron, OH
Patricia Hynes, RN, BSN, PHN, California State Prison-Los Angeles County, Lancaster, CA
Marjorie Imperial, BS, University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
Azra Isovic, CDCI, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago, IL
Mamta Jain, MD, San Joaquin General Hospital, Mountain House, CA
Karen Johnson, MD, Alexandria, VA
Stephen Johnson, MD, DTM&H, Randall Children's Hospital, Portland, OR
Jacquelyn Johnson-Minter, MD, MBA, MPH, Fort Bend County Health and Human Services, Rosenberg, TX
Michael Kaacka, MD, MPH, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Columbia, SC
Cameron Kaiser, MD, MPH, FAAFP, County of Riverside Public Health, Riverside, CA
Tieman Kaitiroa, Nursing Diploma, Ebeye, Kwajalein Atoll, MH
Elisabeth Karamehmet, APRN, MSN, RN, Public Health, Naples, FL
Terri Keehr, BSN, Grand Forks Public Health Department, Grand Forks, ND
Chris Keh, MD, San Francisco Department of Public Health, San Francisco, CA
Marilyn Keith, RN, Mississippi State Department of Health, Jackson, MS
Jimmy Keller, DHSc, National Tuberculosis Controller Association, Pulaski, TN
Roxanne Kerani, PhD, MPH, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
April King-Todd, BSN, MPH, Lomita, CA
Quratulain Kizilbash, MD, MPH, Texas Center for Infectious Disease, University of Texas Northeast, Heartland National Tuberculosis Center, San Antonio, TX
Nidhip Patel, MS, DO, Atlanta, GA
Monica Pecha, MPH, Washington State Department of Health, Olympia, WA
Jamie Pehling, MS, MD, Contra Costa Health Services, San Pablo, CA
Carlos Perez-Velez, MD, Pima County Health Department, Tucson, AZ
Adam Perkins, BS, Missouri State Public Health Laboratory, Jefferson City, MO
Melissa Perkins, RN, St. Mary’s, GA
Kathleen Polhemus, BSRN, Local Community Health Department, Coventry, CT
Christie Posner, BA, MD, Asheville, NC
Ronald Pust, MD, University of Arizona College of Medicine—Tucson, Tucson, AZ
Misael Quezada, PH, Department of Health, Albuquerque, NM
Kendra Radtke, PharmD, University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
Caitlin Reed, MD, MPH, Olive View-UCLA Inpatient TB Unit, Los Angeles, CA
Lee B. Reichman, MD, MPH, Rutgers Global Tuberculosis Institute, Newark, NJ
Jennifer Riemann, BS, ADN, Georgia Department of Public Health, Coastal Health District, Savannah, GA
Alice Rodman, AA, Southwest Health District 8-2, Albany, GA
Mary Ann Rodriguez, MD, Austin Public Health, Austin, TX
Timothy Rodwell, MD, PhD, MPH, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA
Jerri Rogers, AD Nursing, Carroll County Health Department, Carrollton, GA
Laura Romo, MPH, San Francisco Department of Public Health, San Francisco, CA
Kristin Rounds, BA, South Dakota Department of Health, Pierre, SD
Titiolola Rush, BSN, Georgia State TB Program, Atlanta, GA
Rose-Marie Sales, MD, MPH, University Research Co., LLC, Decatur, GA
Lisa Santora, MD, MPH, San Rafael, CA
Rada Savic, PhD, PharmD, San Francisco, CA
Ann Scarpita, RN, BSN, National Tuberculosis Controllers Association, Littleton, CO
Victoria Scarpita, Therapeutic Recreation, Littleton, CO
Marcos Schechter, MD, Emory University, Atlanta, GA
Dean Schraufnagel, MD, Forum of International Respiratory Societies, Chicago, IL
Linda Schultz-Lewis, DVM, MPVM, Butte County Public Health Department and California State University, Chico, Chico, CA
Barbara Seaworth, MD, University of Texas Health Northeast, San Antonio, TX
Eric Sergienko, MD, MPH, Mariposa County Health Department, Mariposa, CA
Maunank Shah, MD, PhD, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Donald Shawver, Jr, BSN, Niagara County Department of Health New York, Ransomville, NY
Daniel Shin, MD, El Camino Hospital, Mountain View, CA
Daniel Shodell, MD, MPH, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Denver, CO
Heidi Simpson, AA, ASN, Howard County Health Department, Kokomo, IN
Karen Simpson, MSHSE, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Samuel Singer, MD, MS, Highland Hospital Pediatrics, Oakland, CA
Sumita Sinha, MD, Westchester County Department of Health, White Plains, NY
Deborah Sodt, BA, BSN, RN, MPH, Minnesota Department of Health (retired), Minneapolis, MN
Lynn Sosa, MD, Connecticut Department of Public Health, Hartford, CT
Kenneth Soyemi, MD, Addison, CA
Richard Steece, PhD, D(ABMM), Tennessee Public Health Laboratory, Nashville, TN
Tanya Stevenson, EdD, MPH, Breathe California Golden Gate, San Francisco, CA
Peter Stewart, BSN, Salt Lake County Health Department, Salt Lake City, UT
Jason Stout, MHS, Duke University Medical Center, Durham, NC
Alex Studemeister, MD FIDSA, Regional Medical Center of San Jose, San Jose, CA
Shiv Sudhakar, MD, Alamo, CA
James Sunstrum, MD, Wayne County TB Clinic, Westland, MI
Brittany Sweitzer, RN, Edgar County Public Health Department, Paris, IL
Allyson Tabor, BSN, RN, PHN, El Dorado County, California, Department of Corrections (retired), South Lake