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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 17, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

I am writing to urge you to make global tuberculosis (TB) control a prominent component of the Global Health Initiative (GHI) your administration is currently formulating.

It is imperative that the GHI, a six-year blueprint for America's global health policy, focus on the often neglected TB crisis. TB kills nearly 2 million people each year and is the leading killer of people with HIV/AIDS. In many cases, AIDS patients receiving drugs thanks to American aid die for lack of TB treatment.

As you have pointed out, the GHI can and should play an important role in our national security strategy. TB control in particular has the potential to improve our standing in strategically important parts of the world. TB is the second leading cause of death among adults in Afghanistan and the third leading cause in Pakistan. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Indonesia are all among the 22 "high burden" TB countries identified by the World Health Organization. The highest rates of drug-resistant TB are found in the former Soviet states. In Ukraine, for example, 16% of new TB cases were found to be highly drug-resistant. Widespread outbreaks of diseases such as TB can destabilize nations and regions and jeopardize long standing political foundations that could threaten American interests as well as our national security.

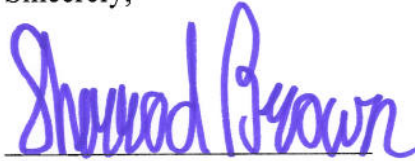
Global aid for TB control and prevention will also advance women's rights, which I know is a priority for your administration. TB is the leading curable infectious killer of women, claiming even more women's lives than maternal mortality. The stigma associated with TB disproportionately affects women, causing them to delay treatment and interfering with their treatment adherence. In India alone, an estimated 100,000 women are rejected by their families every year after being diagnosed with TB.

It is my hope that your administration's GHI includes provisions from the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008 (PL 110-293). That law was approved last year following several months of extensive, bipartisan deliberations, and it set out important targets and reporting requirements on all three diseases, including \$4 billion over five years for bilateral TB programs.

In addition to directly assisting patients in need, this funding would support research at the U.S. Agency for International Development on new TB diagnostics, vaccines, and treatments.

I believe it is in the interest of the United States to fully fund programs addressing TB as authorized under P.L. 110-293, and I urge you to include that funding in the GHI. A request of \$650 million for bilateral TB programs in fiscal year 2011 would represent a significant step in the right direction. I look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

cc: Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget