

## Members of Congress Push to Increase U.S. Assistance to Help Vaccinate the World

December 28, 2021



Last week, Oregon's U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley, U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey (D-MA), U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-MN), and Representatives Tom Malinowski (D-NJ-07), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL-08), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA-07), and Jake Auchincloss (D-MA-04) are leading a congressional effort urgently requesting supplemental funding be included in the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations bill expected to be negotiated early in the new year to support American-led efforts to vaccinate the world.

Merkley, Warren, Markey, Smith, Malinowski, Krishnamoorthi, and Jayapal are all leaders of the bicameral Global Vaccination Caucus. They were joined in today's push by U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI).

In a letter sent to both the Senate and House Appropriations Committees, the lawmakers highlighted the importance for America to scale up efforts to vaccinate the world. The administration recently announced

that it will utilize remaining funds from the American Rescue Plan to further propel domestic vaccine production and get shots into arms. However, far more needs to be done to vaccinate the world as swiftly as possible and prevent the emergence of future variants. As the explosion of Omicron variant cases around the world is showing, it will be impossible to protect Americans and our economy without urgently needed funding for treatment and vaccine delivery in low- and middle-income countries.

“For months, we have warned about the likelihood that new, more dangerous variants would emerge in countries with low vaccination rates,” the lawmakers wrote. “For months, we have called strenuously for a well-funded, comprehensive, American-led global vaccination and distribution program, to prevent the emergence of new variants and bring an end to this pandemic.”

“In July, our fears were realized when the Delta variant swept across our nation, stalling our economic recovery and causing tens of thousands of avoidable deaths,” they continued. “Now, the world faces yet another variant, Omicron, which may be even more transmissible than the Delta variant. We must end this cycle by prioritizing getting shots in arms around the world as soon as possible, especially in low- and lower-middle-income countries, which do not have the resources to vaccinate their populations.”

The letter references the lawmakers’ July 23 request for supplemental funding to support global vaccine initiatives prior to the arrival of the Delta variant. The senators and representatives strongly urged the committees to include no less than \$17 billion for global vaccination and treatment of COVID-19 in the FY22 appropriations omnibus legislation expected to be negotiated by February 18.