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Abstract

A clear lesson of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa is the need for strong public health systems globally, including in the United States. Ebola has highlighted the dangers of weak public health systems, from the immense shortage of health workers in West Africa to the budget cuts at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In response to Ebola and the broader threat of infectious disease, President Obama has proposed a \$6.2 billion supplemental funding request to Congress. The supplemental would surge resources for containing and treating Ebola in West Africa -- including a reserve of funds to enable a robust, flexible response going forward -- enhance prevention and detection of, and response to, Ebola in the United States, and buttress U.S. and partner country health systems to respond rapidly and flexibly to all infectious disease hazards in the future.

The additional resources the supplemental would devote to the ongoing Ebola crisis is critically important. So is the supplemental request's funding to prepare for the future, including developing treatment centers in the United States that would provide advanced care and isolation facilities, and funding for research and development for vaccines and medicines for Ebola and other novel infections. The request would also provide the first significant batch of funding to the Global Health Security Agenda, which President Obama unveiled in February 2014. The Global Health Security Agenda takes an all-hazards approach to building greater global capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases, from zoonotic diseases and antibiotic resistant bacteria to biosecurity and bioterror threats.

From environmental degradation to increased human-animal interchange, the threats are only increasing. Strong public health systems at home and globally are our best defense. Congress should support the President's supplemental funding request, furthering a bipartisan U.S. tradition of support for global health, continuing U.S. global leadership in the Ebola response, and preparing our country and our world for disease threats of the future.