

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 12, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We are writing to express our opposition to the Administration's decision to withhold funding from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). By invoking the Kemp-Kasten Amendment, the Administration withheld \$32.5 million in FY 2019 funding appropriated for UNFPA and blocked them from accessing additional resources, even in response to humanitarian crisis. This funding could have been used to provide critical health services, reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and promote the reproductive freedom and economic security of women worldwide, including in humanitarian crises.

UNFPA's trusted health providers offer clean delivery kits, reproductive health care, reliable contraception, and training to thousands of midwives and health workers. The absence of these programs will put women and children who are in need of quality medical care in danger.

The decision to withhold funding is directly harming women, including women experiencing the humanitarian crisis in Yemen where an estimated one million pregnant women are malnourished. By the end of September 2019, 100 of the 268 hospitals and clinics UNFPA supported in Yemen had closed due to lack of funding.<sup>1</sup> The closures will directly affect at least 650,000 women and girls unable to access vital services.<sup>2</sup> UNFPA estimates that every two hours, a Yemeni woman dies from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, and another 20 suffer preventable injuries, infections or disabilities. UNFPA also plays a critical role coordinating the frontline humanitarian actions with UNICEF and the World Food Programme. The Trump Administration's determination under the Kemp-Kasten Amendment is keeping these women from life-saving services.

The Kemp-Kasten Amendment prohibits funding for "any organization or program which, as determined by the President of the United States, supports or participates in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization." Despite the complete lack of evidence that UNFPA supports or performs coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization, the Trump Administration first issued a Kemp-Kasten determination in a March 30, 2017 announcement and memorandum preventing much-needed funds from going to UNFPA. The March 2017

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<sup>1</sup> <https://yemen.unfpa.org/en/news/life-saving-services-risk-humanitarian-funding-dries-yemen>

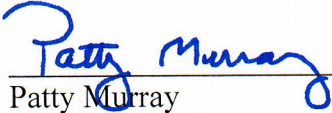
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-women-health/un-says-women-and-babies-at-risk-in-yemen-as-funds-crunch-forces-clinics-to-shut-idUSKCN1VQ2B1>

justification fails to assert a compelling reason to invoke the Kemp-Kasten Amendment, in fact even stating, “there is no evidence that UNFPA directly engages in coercive abortions or involuntary sterilizations ...”<sup>3</sup>

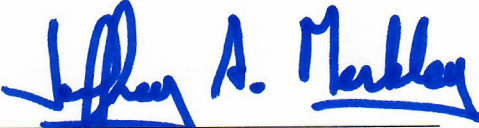
Earlier this year, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted to provide funding to UNFPA, clearly indicating continued bipartisan support for the important work being done by the organization. Rather than providing funding for a vital program with bipartisan support from Congress, the Trump Administration has instead made a determination with no basis in fact to advance ideological goals. This will only do more harm to women in need of quality care.

We encourage you to reconsider your determination and immediately restore funding to the UN Population Fund. Additionally, we request that you please provide the evidence relied upon to invoke the Kemp-Kasten Amendment by December 15, 2019. We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

  
Patty Murray  
United States Senator

  
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

<sup>3</sup> <https://reproductiverights.org/sites/default/files/documents/State-Kemp-Kasten-Amendment-Determination.pdf>