HOW-TO: CONDUCT A LEGISLATIVE VISIT

Ask: Global AIDS Funding for FY2019

August 29, 2018

Every year Congress must appropriate funding to continue the US’s global HIV/AIDS treatment & prevention work. The two main programs that lead this fight are the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB), and Malaria (The Global Fund). While there is generally broad bipartisan support for these programs, there is an important need to push lawmakers to maintain or increase funding levels each year. To reach the UNAIDS goal of 95-95-95 - 95% of people living with HIV (PLWH) knowing their status, 95% of those people on treatment, and 95% of those on treatment virally suppressed - by 2030, we need to drastically increase the amount of funding going to these programs.

The Appropriations Process
The Fiscal Year 2019 (FY2019) budget, which funds the government from Oct 1, 2018 through Sept 30, 2019 is currently being created. Broadly, the funding process for global HIV/AIDS funding begins in two subcommittees in the House and Senate. These subcommittees of the House and Senate Appropriations committees, the ‘State, Foreign Operations, and Associated Programs (SFOPS)’ committees, create budgets that appropriate money to a variety of international development programs. These budgets will go to the full House and Senate Appropriations Committees for review, before a final ‘omnibus’ spending bill is created and voted on by the full chambers. The leadership of these two committees is very influential on what ultimately gets funded at what levels. While both PEPFAR and the Global Fund must be appropriated each year, the Global Fund is ‘replenished’ every three years - i.e. the US commits to contributing a given amount for three years at a time. Currently the Global Fund is funded at $1.35 billion per year and will be ‘replenished’ next year, 2019 for 2020-2022.

The FY2019 Budget
This year, the Senate SFOPS bill, S.3109, funded PEPFAR at a higher level - $4.37 billion - than the House SFOPS bill. There is a chance that House and Senate Appropriation leaders will decide to scrap that number and go with the House bill, which would be devastating for PLWH around the world. So we need to act as global AIDS activists acting here in the US to protect our investment in the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria. The key leaders who will decide this
issue are the Chairs and Ranking Members of the two Appropriation Committees. In the House, that is Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen from New Jersey & Ranking Member Nita Lowey from New York. In the Senate that is Chairman Richard Shelby from Alabama & Ranking Member Patrick Leahy from Vermont. However, we can push our elected officials - whether on the Appropriation Committees or not - to speak with/write a letter to these leaders and push them toward the higher number!

*Conducting a Legislative Visit*

1) **Start early!** Call your Members of Congress (MoCs), both Senators and Representatives now to schedule meetings.
   a) Find the closest office to you - can be found on each MOC’s webpage - and their contact info
   b) Arrange an ‘in-district’ meeting with a staffer in the office. These staffers will be generalists - they will know a little bit about every topic.
   c) Call the MOC’s Washington DC’s office and ask for the staffer (or legislative assistant) working on foreign affairs. Invite them to call into the in-district meeting, or get their contact information and send them an email invitation.

2) **Gather:** a group of passionate students! Designate roles based on the number of students coming to the meeting:
   a) One student should be the facilitator - he or she should introduce the group and explain why you are there (to discuss global AIDS funding). Explain your roles - e.g. medical students, AMSA members, and constituents - and that you are there representing a larger group of constituents who are passionate about this issue.
   b) One student should provide a personal story - the reason that you care about global AIDS. This could be clinically related, something from travel/study abroad, or just an intellectual interest from learning about the topic in school
   c) One student should provide some context - cite some numbers and figures about the global AIDS epidemic and how we need to keep funding the fight to see an AIDS-free generation
   d) One student should do the ask - more about that later.

3) **Close:** the Facilitator can then close the meeting by thanking the staffer(s), providing a one-pager, and getting contact information. This is crucial. Follow up within 24hrs is very important. Send an email with more information, provide answers to any questions, and remind them about the number of constituents that are passionate about this issue.

4) **The ask:** will depend on who your MOC is
   a) If your MOC is a Chairperson or Ranking Member of the Appropriations Committee, directly ask “Will the Congressman/woman support the Senate SFOPS language providing $4.37 billion for PEPFAR in the FY2019 omnibus bill?”
   b) If your MOC is on the House or Senate Appropriation Committee, ask “Will the Congressman/woman contact Chairman Frelinghuysen & Ranking Member Lowey (for the House) or Chairman Shelby & Ranking Member Leahy (for the
Senate) and ask them to support the Senate SFOPS language providing $4.37 billion for PEPFAR in the FY2019 omnibus bill?"
c) If the MOC is not on Appropriations, the ask is similar - to contact the leadership or members of the Appropriations committee to support this language.

5) **Report back:** about what happened, how it went, what their response was. Write an email to the network listserv, aids-advocacy@googlegroups.com and fill out this spreadsheet!

Email the AAN chair at aan.chair@amsa.org with any questions/issues/concerns!