



January 29, 2025

Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) urges you to reconsider the Executive Order issued January 20, 2025 expressing the intention of the United States (U.S.) to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO), to take effect January 2026.¹ In our interconnected world, the WHO ensures that effective treatments for global health emergencies spread quickly through international coordination and collaboration.

With more than 3,200 Fellows in all 50 states and 42 countries, the Academy—an honorific society and policy organization—represents nursing’s most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia. With leadership, innovation, and science as our pillars, the Academy is recognized within the nursing profession, among health care colleagues, and around the globe as a source for evidence-informed policy solutions.

The U.S. was a founding member of the WHO in 1948 and this critical partnership across nations has led to key strides in public health in the nearly eight decades since.² For example, the WHO’s declaration of the eradication of smallpox in 1980 was a profound global public health achievement made possible through global partnership on surveillance and immunization efforts.³ Furthermore, the WHO has advanced the fight against diseases such as polio worldwide and has provided essential response coordination to threats such as Ebola outbreaks. Polio cases worldwide have decreased by more than 99% in the years following the 1988 WHO World Health Assembly resolution to eradicate polio, with eradication still attainable.⁴

Information-sharing is a crucial component of global health and preparedness. Through membership in the WHO, the U.S. is able to both provide and receive data on a wide range of topics that inform preparedness and response efforts. Separating the U.S. from this important work will diminish our global efforts to prevent communicable diseases as well as prepare for and respond to public health emergencies. The potential for the rapid spread of infectious diseases globally clearly illustrates that ensuring the health of our nation requires collaboration and investment in health across the globe. As new global health threats emerge, continued involvement in the WHO is vital.

From a nursing perspective, the global workforce is critical to ensuring the communication, action, and interventions are realized at the front-line of public health emergencies and at all other levels where health care is provided. In fact, according to the WHO, “nurses and midwives account for nearly 50% of the global health workforce” and are often the first or only health care professional a patient may see.⁵ Thus, they often will be the first to identify health emergencies and provide life-saving public health

treatment and rehabilitation. Maintaining the U.S. membership with the WHO is essential for nurses to continue to collaborate and save lives in their own communities through vital information and partnership.

The Academy underscores the importance of the longstanding membership the U.S. has maintained with the WHO. Advancing global health is critical to the advancement of health at home and we urge you to revisit the stated intention of withdrawing from the WHO. The Academy stands ready to work with you to provide expertise and shape policy solutions that ensure healthy lives for all people. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact the Academy's Chief Executive Officer, Suzanne Miyamoto, at smiyamoto@aannet.org or the Academy's Chief Policy Officer, Christine Murphy, at cmurphy@aannet.org.

Sincerely,



Linda D. Scott, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FADLN, FNAP, FAAN
President

¹ The White House. (2025, January 20). *Executive Order: Withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-the-worldhealth-organization/>

² World Health Organization. (2025, January 21). *WHO comments on United States' announcement of intent to withdraw*. www.who.int/news/item/21-01-2025-who-comments-on-united-states--announcement-of-intent-to-withdraw

³ World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Smallpox*. https://www.who.int/health-topics/smallpox#tab=tab_1

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2024, September 10). *About Global Polio Eradication*. <https://www.cdc.gov/global-polio-vaccination/about/index.html>

⁵ World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Nursing and midwifery*. https://www.who.int/health-topics/nursing#tab=tab_2