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Trump Administration's Recent Cuts to Disease Prevention, Vaccinations, and Food Aid Programs (as of March 2025)

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1. Funding Cuts To Infectious Disease Prevention & Control

Domestic Program Cuts:

In the past few days, the Trump administration moved to pull back large amounts of public health funding that were supporting infectious disease monitoring and control in U.S. states. On March 26, 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) confirmed it canceled roughly \$12 billion in federal grants to state and local health departments. These grants had originally been allocated during the COVID-19 pandemic and were being used for activities like disease surveillance, outbreak response, and lab capacity – covering threats such as measles and avian flu.

Termination notices began going out early in the week, abruptly halting programs to track and contain outbreaks (for example, a measles outbreak response in Lubbock, Texas was ordered to stop due to the funding cut). HHS justified the rescissions by stating that “the COVID-19 pandemic is over” and it would “no longer waste billions of taxpayer dollars” on a now “non-existent” threat. However, state officials have sharply criticized the decision. Washington state lost over \$160 million for its health agencies, prompting Senator Patty Murray to urge a reversal – she warned that “senselessly ripping away this funding” undermines the ability to protect families from infectious diseases like measles and bird flu. Illinois’ health department likewise had \$125 million pulled (funds earmarked for emerging disease labs, surveillance, and vaccination efforts), which Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker said will cause “immeasurable harm and disruption” to public health efforts. New York’s Governor reported being notified of over \$300 million in cuts to her state’s health and addiction services, vowing to fight “tooth and nail” against the funding freeze.

In summary, no new law was passed, but a federal policy decision this week abruptly canceled disease prevention funds nationwide, alarming many public health leaders.

Global Health Program Cuts:

These domestic cuts come on the heels of earlier Trump administration actions that slashed support for international infectious disease control. In late February, the administration terminated nearly 10,000 U.S. foreign aid contracts and grants – many of which funded global health, epidemic prevention, and nutrition programs. This move followed a Jan. 20 executive order that paused all foreign development assistance for 90 days pending a review, effectively freezing most U.S. support for health programs abroad. As a result, critical surveillance and response initiatives for diseases like Ebola, Marburg virus, and others have been left in limbo. Analysts estimate that the withdrawal of U.S. support could lead to an upswing in outbreaks: one analysis warned of 28,000+ additional cases of deadly infectious diseases (e.g. Ebola) and up to 200,000 new paralytic polio cases annually if the cuts persist. The Trump administration also officially withdrew the United States from the World Health Organization (WHO) in

January, complaining of unfair funding burdens. This has severed collaboration between U.S. agencies like the CDC and WHO on global disease initiatives.

In combination, these steps represent a significant rollback of U.S. involvement in both domestic and international infectious disease prevention efforts.

2. Vaccination Programs and Polio Eradication Impacts

One of the most consequential effects of the administration's policies has been on vaccination programs – notably the fight against polio. As part of the broad foreign aid cuts, funding for polio eradication was severely reduced. In late February, the State Department terminated UNICEF's grant for polio vaccines as it cut about 90% of USAID's grants worldwide to align with President Trump's "America First" agenda. This translated into a loss of roughly \$133 million that the U.S. was expected to contribute this year to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. According to UNICEF and WHO figures, that U.S. funding would have helped vaccinate around 400 million children against . A senior WHO official, Dr. Hamid Jafari, warned that unless the U.S. reverses these cuts, the global eradication of polio could be delayed, putting more children at risk of paralysis. In fact, during just the 90-day freeze of U.S. aid, an estimated 110 million children might miss their polio vaccine doses, leaving them unprotected in vulnerable countries .

Other vaccination efforts are feeling the strain as well. Domestically, the HHS grant pullback is affecting immunization initiatives for diseases like measles (as noted, some local measles vaccination outreach and surveillance have been halted). Globally, the foreign assistance cuts have disrupted campaigns against diseases such as measles and tuberculosis in developing countries. For example, USAID's former officials pointed out that all anti-malaria supplies for 53 million people were terminated and projected that a prolonged funding halt could increase tuberculosis cases by about 30% worldwide. These vaccination and disease-control program cuts have prompted alarm from health experts. The U.S. health secretary in this administration is Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a prominent vaccine skeptic, which further raises concern among medical professionals. (Kennedy's appointment, confirmed earlier this year, drew criticism given his anti-vaccine views, and he has since pledged to "tackle chronic disease" while questioning some vaccination programs). Public health leaders worry that the combination of leadership hostile to certain vaccines and the massive funding withdrawals will erode hard-won gains against preventable diseases.

3. Reductions In Food Aid and Humanitarian Assistance

International Food Aid:

The Trump administration has also taken drastic steps to cut or "pause" funding for international food aid programs, including those targeting hunger in crisis regions. The broad foreign aid termination on Feb. 26 affected U.S. support for the World Food Programme (WFP) and other hunger relief efforts. The WFP relies on the U.S. for roughly half of its budget, so the freeze has been devastating: WFP was forced to shut down its regional office in Southern Africa, even as that area suffers severe drought and conflict-related food insecurity. In addition, funding cuts have already forced WFP to cut food rations in half for vulnerable refugees – for instance, refugees from Myanmar (Rohingya) and in Kenya have seen their aid reduced. U.N. officials warn that if U.S. funding doesn't resume, key WFP programs fighting child malnutrition in places like Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen may have to shut down completely.

Humanitarian organizations are reporting real-time impacts: Save the Children said hundreds of its life-saving programs are being terminated due to the U.S. foreign aid pullback, noting that

over 4.4 million pounds of food aid is now stuck in warehouses instead of reaching families facing famine. In Sudan and Syria, treatments for severely malnourished children are at risk because funding is vanishing. These cuts hit at a critical moment, as multiple countries are dealing with conflict and drought-related hunger emergencies.

The primary focus of recent directives has been overseas food aid, aligning with the administration's drive to curb foreign aid expenditures. It's worth noting that USAID traditionally purchases around \$2.1 billion in food commodities from U.S. farmers annually for international food assistance. Those purchases – and the American agricultural jobs linked to them – are also under threat due to the aid freeze. In short, U.S. support that would normally help feed millions in crisis zones (and bolster U.S. agribusiness) is being drastically scaled back.

Domestic Food Assistance:

Recent federal budget cuts have significantly impacted domestic food assistance programs, particularly those supporting school lunches and local food initiatives. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has terminated two key programs:

1. Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS): This initiative allocated approximately \$660 million to schools and childcare facilities, enabling them to purchase food directly from local farmers and producers. The cessation of LFS funding means that many schools will lose financial support that facilitated the inclusion of fresh, locally sourced foods in student meals.

2. Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA): Designed to aid food banks and similar organizations in procuring local produce, the LFPA's termination affects the ability of these entities to provide nutritious options to communities in need.

These cuts are part of broader federal efforts to reduce government spending, which have led to the elimination of over \$1 billion in funding for local food programs. The USDA justified these decisions by stating that the programs were established to address supply chain challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and are no longer deemed necessary.

Impact on Schools and Students:

The termination of these programs poses challenges for school districts nationwide. For instance, in New York City, the Department of Education announced the cancellation of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year due to federal funding cuts. This program previously provided students with fresh fruit and vegetable snacks multiple times a week.

Similarly, in Manistee County, Michigan, school food service directors expressed concern over the USDA's decision, highlighting that the cuts will negatively impact both school districts and local farms. The loss of funding affects the ability to purchase fresh, local produce, which has been integral to providing nutritious meals to students.

Impact on Food Banks and Communities:

Food banks are also experiencing strain due to these federal cutbacks. The reduction in funding for programs like LFPA has led to decreased deliveries of essential food items such as produce, meat, dairy, and eggs. Food banks across multiple states report increased difficulty in meeting the growing demand, exacerbating food insecurity among low-income populations.

State Responses:

In response to these federal cuts, some states are taking measures to mitigate the impact. New York Governor Kathy Hochul reaffirmed the state's commitment to providing free breakfast and

lunch to more than 2.7 million students, urging the federal government to continue supporting vital food assistance programs.

These developments underscore the challenges faced by domestic food assistance programs amid federal budget reductions, highlighting the need for continued advocacy and support to ensure that vulnerable populations, especially schoolchildren, have access to nutritious meals.

4. Official Reactions and Clarifications

No new standalone executive order was publicly issued on March 26 specifically targeting these programs; rather, the drastic funding cuts are the result of policy directives and reviews set in motion earlier in the administration's term (e.g. the January 20, 2025 executive orders on foreign aid and global health, as well as agency-level cost-cutting measures). However, the cumulative effect became evident this week as multiple agencies implemented funding terminations in line with the administration's "budget savings" mandate. The cuts have been widely covered by reputable outlets and have prompted strong responses:

U.N. and NGOs

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres urged the U.S. to reconsider what he called "severe" and "devastating" aid cuts, warning that "going through with these cuts will make the world less healthy, less safe and less prosperous". International aid groups like Save the Children have issued statements highlighting life-or-death consequences for millions of children if health, nutrition, and education programs vanish.

<https://www.savethechildren.org/.../aid-program-cuts-put...>

They describe the situation as chaotic and urgent, asking for alternative funding to fill the gap if the U.S. withdrawal continues.

U.S. Officials

Within the U.S., officials from both parties in affected states are speaking out. Democratic-led states have been very vocal – for example, Senator Murray and several governors (Illinois, New York, Washington, and others) publicly condemned the domestic public health funding cuts, describing them as dangerously shortsighted.

Even some Republican lawmakers have quietly raised concerns about potential impacts on their states' health departments and hospital systems (though most Republican officials have framed the cuts as necessary "belt-tightening").

The administration, for its part, argues that these moves are about eliminating waste and duplication. President Trump's newly created "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) task force – led by outside advisers – claims to have identified tens of billions in "unnecessary" spending in health and aid programs. Indeed, the White House points to an estimated \$60 billion in overseas assistance slashed (and even the shuttering of USAID itself) as a fulfillment of cost-cutting promises.

HHS officials likewise announced an internal restructuring to cut thousands of agency jobs (including 2,400 positions at the CDC and 1,200 at NIH) as part of this cost-saving campaign. They maintain that core missions won't be compromised, but many experts are skeptical.

5. Bottom Line

Credible news reports and official statements confirm that no new “surprise” executive order was signed on March 26 targeting these programs – because the reductions were already in motion. The Trump administration has, over the past several weeks, executed a series of policy directives that dramatically reduce U.S. funding for infectious disease control, vaccinations (like polio eradication), and food aid. These actions – from the global aid freeze in late February to the domestic public health grant cancellations this week – are real and substantiated. Far from being rumors, they have been reported by outlets such as Reuters, CBS News, and others, and they are drawing intense criticism from public health authorities and humanitarian organizations worldwide.

Unless reversed, these funding cuts are expected to have significant impacts: weakening disease outbreak preparedness at home, stalling vaccine programs (risking the resurgence of diseases like polio), and worsening hunger crises abroad. The consensus among global health and aid experts is that these policy moves mark a sharp retreat of U.S. leadership in fighting epidemics and famine, with potentially grave consequences if they continue unchecked.

6. Sources

Recent reporting from Reuters, U.S. News & World Report, and Voice of America, as well as statements from officials and organizations, have been used to compile this summary. Key details were drawn from Reuters reports on the HHS grant cancellations and polio funding warnings, a Voice of America news briefing on U.N. reactions, and press releases/analyses by groups like Save the Children and the Better World Campaign tracking foreign aid cuts. All evidence points to significant Trump administration directives in late March 2025 that cut funding for infectious disease prevention, vaccination initiatives, and food aid programs – with far-reaching impacts already unfolding. The reports of such cuts are accurate, not false, and have been widely corroborated by official sources and expert observers.