



**U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Outside Witness Testimony**

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**“U.S. Government Response: Fighting Ebola and Protecting America”**

With world attention focused on the fight to contain Ebola in West Africa, time is of the essence to respond quickly to save as many lives as possible. Thank you for convening today’s hearing and for creating the opportunity to share perspectives on the Ebola response. It is in the best tradition of American values and compassion that people in need in the affected countries can count on the United States.

AmeriCares has been responding to natural and civil disasters for 32 years. We have learned many important lessons responding to all the major disasters in this time, from the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, the Southeast Asia tsunami in 2004, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the 2010 Haiti earthquake and last year’s super typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

AmeriCares began responding to the Ebola outbreak in April 2014 when a partner hospital in Liberia called us asking for protective gear for their health workers. They had literally no protective supplies – no gloves, gowns or masks – for their staff, who would be confronting this crisis firsthand. Since then, we have delivered over 1.3 million units of personal protective equipment plus other medicines and supplies valued at \$1.9 million to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Much has been donated by generous American pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, with more in the pipeline.

As the epidemic worsened, AmeriCares response expanded and we are now working to achieve four objectives:

1. Expand Ebola treatment capacity;
2. Prevent contagion and future outbreaks through community engagement;
3. Restore and increase long-term access to essential health services; and
4. Establish lasting safety practices in health facilities to protect health workers and patients.

It’s important to note that Ebola is manifesting two death tolls: one for those who succumb to the virus, and another for those who perish without access to health services for everyday emergencies such as malaria, complicated child birth and road accidents.

Our efforts, and those of many other humanitarian actors, are greatly enhanced by the United States Government’s bold commitments to the affected countries.

AmeriCares is grateful to our government for stepping into the void and making this coordinated, large-scale battle to contain Ebola possible. **We extend our sincerest appreciation to the U.S. State Department and USAID for coordinating the response; to DOD for building urgently needed Ebola**

**Treatment Units, and the field hospital for health workers as a vital contingency measure; to the CDC for its vigilance, guidance and training; and to the White House for galvanizing support for the response.**

If we are successful in combating Ebola, the case counts will come down fast. But when they do, we must not rush to pack up and leave early. First, we must be sure the outbreak has fully ended. Second, we should turn the incredible influx of personnel, expertise, and health care delivery capabilities to address the region's ongoing, essential health needs. **We must keep our eyes on the pre-existing agendas set by the Ministries of Health to strengthen their health systems. Our efforts must align and integrate with their priorities—so that this crisis never occurs again and does not threaten other shores—including ours.**

To help the affected nations and communities fight Ebola and build adequate health care systems, humanitarian health organizations need:

- **Support for the American health and relief workers who are traveling to West Africa** to fight Ebola at its source. This includes:
  - **Employer support so health workers may take leave from their jobs:** Senior administrators of hospitals, medical schools, government agencies, and other employers have an important, enabling role to play in granting approval for their staff to take leave—finding ways to cover their duties, guaranteeing their positions upon return, and supporting them during quarantine.  
  
**Quarantine support:** The returning health care workers and other relief personnel should be supported and treated with respect as they follow the protocols established for returnees. Health workers should be able to quarantine in their homes or other suitable housing with access to outdoor space and appropriate care if needed. They should receive wages while in quarantine and the offer of counseling. Communicating guidelines to the states (and the media) for the treatment and handling of returnees would effectively support the overseas activities.
- **Insurance:** The insurance industry is not entertaining new business related to work in West Africa and is analyzing their present business regarding their exposures in the region. This limits the number of employees – from health workers to logisticians – we can put in the field, and the evacuation and safety measures we can extend to them. Where the insurance market is not meeting the needs of the humanitarian community in this crisis, the U.S. government might consider ways to serve as an insurer of last resort or develop other contractual methods for limiting the financial risks.
- **Financial Resources:** We need significant resources to first combat Ebola at its source and help Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea rebuild their devastated health infrastructures. This is a long-term effort that is critical in order to stop this epidemic and prevent future ones.

AmeriCares has responded to disasters for many decades and we know that a real crisis response continues long after the death toll stops and the news cameras leave. As crisis responders, we commit ourselves to building resilience and a foundation for healthier futures – working hand in hand with frontline health workers, engaging global health experts, and collaborating with community and government leaders. Each of you here today is an Ebola responder, and we thank you sincerely.

The United States is a beacon of hope, shining now for people whose lives hang in the balance. We ask for your continued support in the months and perhaps years ahead, as we work collaboratively to ensure a strong recovery.