



Contact: Dave Chokshi
225-354-6673
daveash@med.upenn.edu

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Students Across North America Call for Universities to Stop Abetting Access-to-Medicines Crisis in Poor Countries *International Leaders Voice Support for Student Activists*

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. – A student group seeking to make life-saving medicines more accessible in developing countries has caught the attention of an array of international leaders. A South African Supreme Court Justice, four Nobel laureates, and humanitarians including the UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa and the co-founders of Partners in Health have voiced their support for the recently-released Philadelphia Consensus Statement of Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM).

The Consensus Statement consists of three major policy proposals to reform the way universities develop and license biomedical research discoveries. According to the Statement, universities should: (1) promote equal access to the fruits of university research, such as drugs and vaccines; (2) engage in and promote research and development for neglected diseases; and (3) measure research success according to impact on human welfare. The text of the Philadelphia Consensus Statement and a full list of signatories are available at <http://consensus.essentialmedicine.org/>.

“The Philadelphia Consensus Statement represents a watershed moment for universities to collectively do the right thing when it comes to making their innovations available to those who need it most,” said Justice Edwin Cameron, who serves on the South African Supreme Court of Appeal. Justice Cameron was the first senior South African official to state publicly that he was living with HIV/AIDS.

“For too long, life-saving medical tools that are the fruits of university-led discovery have been denied to poor people in poor countries. If our universities really are to be institutions for the public good, this must change,” said Dr. Paul Farmer, co-founder of the humanitarian organization Partners in Health and Presley Professor of Medical Anthropology at Harvard University.

The issue of university research and the access crisis has also attracted the attention of policymakers at the national level. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), ranking member on the Judiciary Committee, recently introduced legislation requiring all federally-funded research institutions to ensure that the drugs they develop are supplied to poor countries at the lowest possible cost. The *Public Research in the Public Interest Act of 2006* (S. 4040) reflects a growing consensus that universities have failed to act on an issue uniquely within their power.

"Universities are, before anything else, institutions dedicated to the creation and dissemination of knowledge in the public interest. The Public Research in the Public Interest Act of 2006 is designed in

the spirit of that commitment," said Senator Leahy. "I have introduced this legislation because the leaders of universities have not yet been able to come together around a different approach. Regardless of how it is achieved, I believe that increasing the availability of the medical innovations that come from publicly-funded research centers is a sound solution to a pressing global health concern."

About Universities Allied for Essential Medicines

UAEM is a coalition of over 35 student chapters across North America dedicated to using university action to ameliorate the access-to-medicines crisis in developing countries. Universities Allied for Essential Medicines has a two-fold mission: (1) to determine how universities can help ensure that biomedical end products, such as drugs, are made more accessible in poor countries and (2) to increase the amount of research conducted on neglected diseases, or those diseases predominantly affecting people who are too poor to constitute a market attractive to private-sector R&D investment. In both cases, universities are well-placed to make a difference. University scientists are major contributors in the drug development pipeline. At the same time, universities have an avowed commitment to advancing the public good. As members of these universities, our fundamental goal is to hold them to this commitment. Please see <http://www.essentialmedicine.org/> for more information.

About the Philadelphia Consensus Statement

The Philadelphia Consensus Statement was adopted by Universities Allied for Essential Medicines following the 2006 annual conference held in early October at the University of Pennsylvania. Initial signatories include four Nobel laureates, nine of the most distinguished professors in the field of intellectual property law, and international luminaries including Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa; Zackie Achmat, founder of South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign; and Jim Yong Kim, former Director of the Department of HIV/AIDS at the World Health Organization.

The text of the statement and a full list of initial signatories is available online at: <http://consensus.essentialmedicine.org/>

About the Public Research in the Public Interest Act of 2006 (S.4040)

This bill would allow generic manufacturers to supply medicines originating from federally-funded university innovations in developing countries at affordable prices. Because these licensing terms encourage the introduction of reduced-price drugs only in markets too poor to otherwise afford them, its terms do not threaten intellectual property, corporate investments, or profits in wealthy nations. Moreover, under the proposal, both pharmaceutical companies and universities would receive royalties from the sale of generics in developing-world markets.

The text of S.4040 is available online at: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=109_cong_bills&docid=f:s4040is.txt.pdf