

Working Group on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness

October 25, 2007

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Room S-131 Capitol
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-218 Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Room S-146A Capitol
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Room 1016 LHOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Byrd, Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Cochran and Ranking Member Lewis:

On behalf of the Working Group on Pandemic Flu Preparedness, we want to express our support for the pandemic influenza funding included in the House and Senate versions of the FY 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations measure.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently reported that avian influenza has a case fatality rate of 61 percent, and WHO director Margaret Chan cautioned that “the world will experience another influenza pandemic sooner or later.” A recent Government Accountability Office Report (GAO) noted that an influenza pandemic could result in 200,000 to 2 million deaths in the U.S. Clearly, we must continue to take seriously the threat posed by avian influenza.

The President’s \$1.2 billion budget request for pandemic flu preparedness for FY 2008 included \$870 million for one-time funding for vaccine and antiviral purchases and for the development of rapid diagnostics, as well as \$322 million for ongoing pandemic preparedness activities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. We are pleased that the House-passed version of the Labor/HHS Appropriations bill includes a total of \$1.1 billion to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic, and the Senate version allocates \$888,000,000 for pandemic flu activities within HHS. We urge you to include the \$1.1 billion from the House version into the final Labor/HHS funding bill.

This funding is needed to continue the progress made thus far in pandemic preparedness. Such progress includes, stockpiling enough antiviral drugs for the treatment of more than 50 million Americans affected by pandemic influenza and the sequencing of the entire genetic blueprints of 2,250 human and avian influenza viruses from around the world. In addition, the FDA licensed a pre-pandemic influenza vaccine. Although the approved vaccine has limited effectiveness, it is

considered an important first step for future FDA approval of more effective pre-pandemic and pandemic vaccines.

Despite this progress, the Homeland Security Council's *One-Year Summary of the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan* noted that preparedness gaps and vulnerabilities exist and must be addressed, with regard to our connectivity, surveillance, surge capacity and vaccine development and production. With that in mind, we should be doing all we can to fulfill our responsibilities to the American people and accelerate our efforts to prepare for an influenza pandemic. The recent GAO report, while detailing some of the successful pandemic-related efforts by HHS, does point out that "while these approaches have been significant, considerably more work needs to be done."

With this in mind, we again urge the inclusion of at least the House-passed funding level of \$1.1 billion for pandemic preparedness. Additionally, after FY 2007, there will be no additional annually recurring funding available for state and local pandemic preparedness activities, which includes updating and exercising pandemic response plans and building medical surge capacity. Thus, we also respectfully request that you consider providing an additional \$350 million for ongoing state and local preparedness. Our final request is for the appropriation of an additional \$45 million for the pandemic vaccine injury compensation fund.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this request. The Working Group on Pandemic Preparedness appreciates your combined leadership and looks forward to continuing to work with you to better protect our nation from this potentially deadly virus.

Sincerely,

3M Company - Occupational Health and Environmental Safety Division
Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American Lung Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Public Health Association
American Red Cross
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Campaign for Public Health
Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy (CIDRAP)
Center for Biosecurity, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
Coalition for Health Diplomacy
Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA)
National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
RetireSafe
Scian, The Institute for Scientific Policy Analysis
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Trust for America's Health

Please direct all inquires or comments to Jeff Levi (jlevi@tfah.org), Kim Elliott (kelliott@tfah.org), or Rich Hamburg (rhamburg@tfah.org). All can be reached by phone at 202-233-9870. Trust for America's Health is committed to sharing information with all members of the Working Group on Pandemic Preparedness or directing specific inquiries to participating organizations.