

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 27, 2003

The Honorable Arlen Specter  
Chairman  
Labor-HHS-Education  
Appropriations Subcommittee  
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Ranking Member  
Labor-HHS-Education  
Appropriations Subcommittee  
186 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

We write to respectfully request that during the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Conference Committee, you do whatever you can to raise the level of funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Immunization Program.

This program provides state health agencies with essential funding to carry out a variety of important immunization activities including, 1) identifying underimmunized children and adults; 2) immunizing children; 3) responding to outbreaks; 4) educating parents about the need for immunizations; 5) educating health professionals about proper and timely vaccination practices; 6) developing immunization registries; and 7) educating adults about the importance of adult immunizations.

More than 900,000 US children still are not adequately immunized and more than 11,000 children are born each day, all of whom require the full battery of vaccinations. Over the past five years, the public sector cost of the full complement of recommended childhood vaccinations has grown from roughly \$200 to almost \$450 per child, more than doubling the cost of vaccinating a child. Despite increases in recent years, CDC funding has not kept pace with escalating vaccine purchase costs.

Similarly, current funding does not allow states to adequately address adult immunization needs. The CDC estimates there are, on average, 36,000 influenza-related deaths a year in the United States. Another 114,000 Americans are hospitalized, and tens of millions miss work and school. Not even half of the individuals at highest risk received flu shots last year. As CDC Director Julie Gerberding recently stated, "It is simply unacceptable that such a large number of people continue to die and suffer as a result of influenza."

The National Immunization Program is central to preserving and protecting the general population from naturally occurring diseases as well as preparing our response to an intentional disease outbreak. As the burden of increased vaccine purchase costs grows, programs across the country are struggling to maintain basic childhood immunization coverage levels. In addition, states are being forced to grapple with the new challenges posed by the ever-present threat of bioterrorism and the need for adequate public health preparedness and response capacity.

We are grateful to the Committee for its longstanding support of CDC's National Immunization Program and urge you to do all you can to increase funding for this program in the final conference report. We look forward to working with you to provide the necessary resources to preserve the tremendous progress we have made in protecting our children and adults from vaccine preventable diseases.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

Chris Smith

Chris Dodd

Jim Jeffords

Dick Durbin

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Bob Leahy

John F. Kerry

Chuck Schumer

Patty Murray

Bill Chafe

John Edwards

Blanche L. Lincoln

J. Wilson

Robert A. McLaughlin

W. J. [unclear]

Jim Larson

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