

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

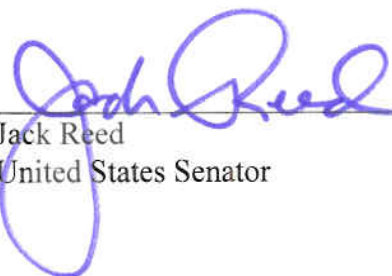
As you work on the Fiscal Year 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we respectfully request \$802.5 million for the national immunization program authorized under Section 317 of the Public Health Service Act at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This year, CDC submitted a report to Congress estimating that \$1.1 billion is needed to provide recommended vaccines to eligible children, adolescents, and adults.

The Section 317 immunization program provides essential funding to state and local health departments for vaccinating children, adolescents, and adults. It ensures that children who are not eligible for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, and who cannot otherwise afford immunization, can be vaccinated. The majority of Section 317 program funds are used by states to conduct routine childhood immunization programs, with a smaller portion remaining for adolescent and adult immunization programs. Therefore, despite high vaccination rates among pre-school-aged children, adolescent and adult vaccination rates remain considerably lower, and racial and ethnic disparities persist.


The CDC report to Congress clearly illustrates that the Section 317 program does not receive sufficient funding to carry out its essential public health mission. We need our nation's population to be well-vaccinated so that it is less vulnerable to the risks of preventable diseases. Our request would ensure access to cost-effective prevention measures. For every dollar invested to provide the seven recommended pediatric vaccines, society saves \$16.50 in direct and indirect costs. This results in billions of dollars in savings from the Section 317 program alone.

Thank you for your past leadership and support of efforts to extend access to life-saving vaccines to children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senator

Chris Dodd

Joe Biden

Blanche L. Lincoln

Barack Obama

Chuck Schumer

Frank R. Lautenberg

Boyd Wicker

Debbie Stabenow

Jon Lick

Bob Casey

Paul Leini

Susan Collins

Thom Harkin

John Chafee

Tim Wirth

Robert Menendez

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Bobby Berk

Al Franken