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# THE 317 COALITION

May 16, 2006

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_:

As organizations committed to increasing the Federal discretionary funding for the National Immunization Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), commonly known as "section 317" of the Public Health Service Act, we are writing to urge you to provide \$802 million in the FY 2007 Labor, HHS Appropriations Bill for this critical program.

As you may know, this program provides for vaccines for children who do not qualify for the mandatory Vaccines for Children program (VFC), as well as adolescents and adults. The 317 funds are used to purchase and administer vaccines, usually at local health departments, and for immunization delivery services, surveillance, communication, and education.

Vaccines are one of the great success stories in public health and are among the most cost-effective health interventions. With the advent of new technologies, an unprecedented number of new vaccines are being introduced and recommended to fight diseases once thought to be out of reach of prevention efforts. New vaccines have recently become available to prevent severe diseases like invasive pneumococcal disease, meningitis and rotavirus gastroenteritis and to boost immunity to pertussis (or whooping cough). Vaccines likely to become available in the near future will offer protection against shingles and human papilloma virus, the latter of which causes cervical cancer. In addition to these new vaccines, recommendations for both the hepatitis A and seasonal flu vaccines have recently been broadened. Unfortunately, federal funding for the 317 Program has remained relatively level for the last five years.

Never has there been a time when vaccines are more critical as we brace for the possibility of a pandemic flu outbreak. We need our nation's children to be fully vaccinated so that they are less vulnerable to the risks of preventable diseases. Equally as important, additional funding must be made available so that we are able to reach recommended vaccination levels for adolescents and adults. The burden of vaccine-preventable diseases in adults in the United States is staggering. Approximately, 43,000 U.S. adults die annually of vaccine-preventable diseases. Pneumonia and influenza were the fifth leading cause of death in all persons aged 65 and older based on 2000 national mortality data.

Given the years and enormous investment required to bring new vaccines to the public, it is imperative that we ensure access to these cost-effective, disease prevention measures once they become available and recommended by the medical community.

Please join us in ensuring that all individuals have access to life-saving vaccines.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians \* American Academy of Pediatrics \* American Academy of Physician Assistants \* American Association of Occupational Health Nurses \* American Immunization Registry Association \* American Medical Association \* American Pharmacists Association \* American Public Health Association \* Association of Immunization Managers Campaign for Public Health \* Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center \* Every Child By Two \* GlaxoSmithKline \* Hepatitis B Foundation \* Hepatitis Foundation International

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