
THE 317 COALITION

September 20, 2006

The Honorable Mike Leavitt
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

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 additional funding in the Fiscal Year 2008 budget for this critical program for vaccine purchase and program operations.

As you know, this program provides for vaccines for children who do not qualify for the Vaccines for Children entitlement program (VFC), as well as adolescents and adults. The 317 funds are used to purchase and administer vaccines, usually at state and 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, as well as human papillomavirus, which may prevent up to 70% of the cases of cervical cancer. In addition to these new vaccines, recommendations for the hepatitis A, chickenpox, and seasonal flu vaccines have recently been broadened. Unfortunately, funding for Federal programs that support immunizations for underinsured children are not keeping pace with the rapidly increasing number and costs of new vaccines that are recommended, and as a nation, we are grossly underfunded to reach adolescent and adult populations through these programs. As a result, we are unlikely to realize the full public health benefits of these vaccines.

Never has there been a time when vaccines are more critical as we brace for the possibility of a pandemic influenza 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 and public health community. We urge you to send to Congress a fiscal year 2008 budget request that seeks to close the gap between available

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funding and the needs of state and local health departments for the 317 immunization program. Please join us in ensuring that all individuals have access to life-saving vaccines.

Sincerely,

Adult Immunization Coalition of Tompkins County (Ithaca, NY) ▫ Alabama Adult Immunization Coalition ▫ American Academy of Pediatrics ▫ American Association of Occupational Health Nurses ▫ American Immunization Registry Association ▫ American Liver Foundation ▫ American Medical Association ▫ American Social Health Association ▫ American Society of Health-System Pharmacists ▫ Arizona Partnership for Immunization ▫ Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute ▫ Asian Liver Center at Stanford University ▫ Campaign for Public Health ▫ Chicago Area Immunization Campaign ▫ Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center ▫ Community Health Information Collaborative (Duluth, MN) ▫ Consortium for Healthy and Immunized Communities, Inc. (Northern Ohio) ▫ Emory Vaccine Center ▫ Essex Metro Immunization Coalition (New Jersey) ▫ Every Child By Two ▫ Georgia AIDS Coalition ▫ Georgia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics ▫ GlaxoSmithKline ▫ Greater Salt Lake Immunization Coalition (Utah) ▫ Hep C Advocate Network, Inc. (HepCAN) ▫ Hep C Connection (Denver, CO) ▫ Hepatitis B Foundation ▫ Hep-C ALERT (North Miami, FL) ▫ HepTREC, The Delaware Valley Hepatitis Treatment, Research and Education Center ▫ Immunization Action Coalition ▫ Immunization Action Coalition of Washington ▫ Immunization Coalition of Washington, DC ▫ Immunization Task Force – Metro Omaha (Nebraska) ▫ Indiana Immunization Coalition ▫ Iowa Immunization Coalition ▫ Kenosha Immunization Coalition (Wisconsin) ▫ Laredo Health Coalition ▫ MedImmune ▫ Meningitis Angels ▫ Merck ▫ Migrant Clinicians Network, Inc. (Austin, TX) ▫ National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors ▫ National Association of County and City Health Officials ▫ National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners ▫ National Coalition of STD Directors ▫ National Foundation for Infectious Diseases ▫ National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition ▫ National Meningitis Association ▫ National Task Force on Hepatitis B ▫ National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable ▫ Northern Manhattan Start Right Coalition ▫ Northern Nevada Immunization Coalition ▫ Oregon Partnership to Immunize Children ▫ Pennsylvania Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics ▫ PKIDS/Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases ▫ San Francisco Immunization Coalition ▫ Society for Adolescent Medicine ▫ Tri-County Immunization Coalition (Charleston, SC) ▫ Trust for America's Health ▫ Tulsa Area Immunization Coalition ▫ Vietnamese Community Health Promotion Project – UCSF ▫ Visiting Nurse Association of America ▫ Wyeth