

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 17, 2006

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

As your subcommittee prepares to markup the Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07) Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill, we ask that the minimum funding level for the National Immunization Program (NIP) be set at \$614.5 million, the same amount the House appropriations committee recently approved. If additional resources can be identified, we ask that they be directed toward this important initiative so that children and vulnerable adults can continue to have access to life-saving vaccines.

The proliferation of vaccines is one of the most remarkable accomplishments in modern public health. Debilitating and deadly illnesses such as smallpox have been eradicated. Polio is on its way to being eliminated thanks to effective vaccines and public health efforts. Vaccines exist to prevent diseases such as meningitis, shingles, invasive pneumococcal disease and whooping cough. We now have a vaccine to protect against the human papillomavirus, which is known to cause cervical cancer.

Despite our tremendous successes in this area, we still face many challenges. This year's widespread mumps outbreak with over 4,400 reported cases in 14 states--Iowa, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Mississippi, Nebraska, Missouri, South Dakota, New York, Minnesota, Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, and Michigan--is a clear reminder of why sufficient resources to address vaccine preventable diseases are needed. States have used NIP funding to conduct vaccination clinics, track and notify contacts of infected individuals, and inform the public and health professionals about ways to protect themselves and others from developing mumps.

The NIP, or the "Section 317" program, is key to increasing vaccination rates among children 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. It also provides limited access to immunizations for uninsured and underinsured adults. Unfortunately, the Section 317 program is not receiving sufficient funding to carry out its essential public health mission. We need our nation's children to be fully vaccinated so that they are less vulnerable to the risks of preventable diseases. That is why we are asking for the NIP to receive the funding it needs to ensure access to cost-effective prevention measures once they become available and are endorsed by the public health and medical communities.

Thank you for your past leadership and support of efforts to extend access to life-saving vaccines for both children and vulnerable adults. We hope that you will look favorably upon our request to allocate at least \$614.5 million to the National Immunization Program next fiscal year and provide additional funding if available.

Warm Regards,



Gordon H. Smith



Jack Reed



Mike DeWine



Richard Durbin



Susan Collins



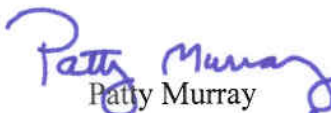
Ron Wyden



Edward Kennedy



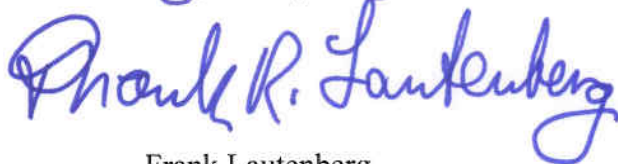
Joe Lieberman




Patty Murray



Hillary Rodham Clinton



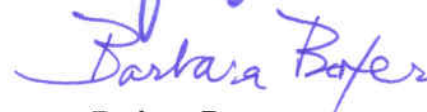
Frank Lautenberg



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