

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we write to thank you for the increase in funding in FY 2022 for the national immunization program authorized under Section 317 of the Public Health Service Act at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and we urge you to provide \$1.13 billion for this program in FY 2023.

Vaccines are one of the greatest success stories in public health and are among the most cost-effective ways to prevent disease. Indeed, we know that for each dollar invested in the U.S. childhood immunization program, there are over ten dollars of societal savings and three dollars in direct medical savings. Moreover, childhood immunizations over the past twenty years have prevented 381 million illnesses and 855,000 deaths, and saved nearly \$1.65 trillion of dollars in societal costs. Unfortunately, millions of children and adults have missed routine vaccinations due to the pandemic, putting years of success in jeopardy.

The Section 317 immunization program acts as the backbone of our nation's public health system by supporting the science that informs our national immunization policy, helping uninsured and low-income adults pay for vaccines, monitoring the safety of vaccines, educating providers and performing community outreach, and conducting surveillance, laboratory testing, and epidemiology to respond to disease outbreaks. A robust immunization infrastructure – in addition to the vaccines – is imperative to support programs such as Vaccines for Children (VCF). VCF relies upon the critical infrastructure and operations funded through the Section 317 program to effectively serve millions of American children each year.

An effective vaccine campaign is critical to controlling COVID-19, requiring the establishment and maintenance of a robust public health immunization infrastructure. Data reporting challenges, limited workforce, lack of enrolled adult providers, vaccine hesitancy, and health disparities have hampered the efficient rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Increased and sustained investment is needed to modernize immunization information systems (IIS), establish state-to-state IIS data sharing, increase and sustain a network of adult immunization providers reporting data into IIS, and engage with communities to build vaccine confidence and reduce disparities.

Control of COVID-19 will likely include confronting virus variations and the potential need for more boosters or annual COVID vaccinations, like annual flu vaccination. Providing \$1.13 billion for the Section 317 Program in FY 2023 would sustain the improvements made through the emergency supplemental bills to ensure both routine immunization is restored and future preparedness is assured. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this vital request.

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