

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2015

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

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

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you prepare the fiscal year (FY) 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to provide \$650 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).

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 322 million illnesses, 732,000 deaths, and nearly \$1.4 trillion in societal costs.

However, vaccines alone cannot protect a population. A robust immunization infrastructure is required to support programs such as Vaccines for Children, which relies upon the critical infrastructure and operations funded through the Section 317 program to effectively serve millions of American children each year. The Section 317 program acts as the backbone of our nation's public health infrastructure by supporting the science that informs our national immunization policy, providing a safety net to uninsured, poor adults for vaccine purchases, monitoring the safety of vaccines, educating providers and performing community outreach, and conducting surveillance, laboratory testing, and epidemiology to respond to disease outbreaks.

In 2014, the CDC submitted a report to Congress concluding that the Section 317 program requires additional funding to carry out its essential public health mission of protecting Americans from preventable diseases. In that same year, CDC reported 644 cases of measles across 27 states; the largest number of cases since the elimination of measles in the U.S. in 2000. CDC estimates that it can cost over \$140,000 to contain each individual case of measles.

The current 2015 measles outbreak, which has affected over 120 individuals in 17 states, should serve as a wake-up call. The 317 program has supported the rapid response effort and is being used to buttress local and state public health capacity for surveillance, detection, and response.

Providing \$650 million for the Section 317 program in FY 2016 would ensure access to cost-effective prevention measures to help keep Americans healthier. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

Patrick Leahy

Chris Coons

Dan Claitor

Kirsten Gillibrand

Ron Wyden

Elizabeth Warren

Sheldon Whitehouse

Dick Durbin

Brian Schatz

Rebecca Steiner

John H. Chafee

Tom Carper

Jeanne Shaheen

Al Franken

Chuck Schumer

Mazie Hironaka

Richard Blumenthal