

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2011

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

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

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

As you prepare the fiscal year (FY) 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to provide at least level funding 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 ensure that any funding transferred to this program from the Prevention and Public Health Fund supplement, not supplant, current funding levels.

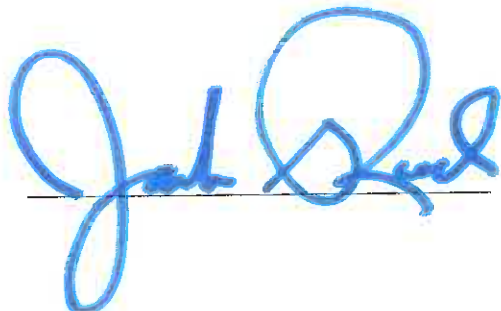
The Section 317 program provides essential funding to state and local health departments for vaccinating children, adolescents, and adults. It ensures that children who are not eligible for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and who cannot otherwise afford immunization can be vaccinated. In some states, any remaining funding is provided to adult immunization programs.

In 2009, the CDC submitted a report to Congress which illustrated that the Section 317 program requires additional funding to carry out its essential public health mission of protecting Americans from preventable diseases. Recently, there have been outbreaks of measles and pertussis, both vaccine preventable diseases. In fact, from January 1 to May 20, 2011, a total of 118 cases of measles were reported from 23 states and New York City, the highest reported number for the same period since 1996. Unvaccinated persons accounted for 105 of the 118 cases.

Investing in immunizations is also effective in reducing long-term direct health care spending and indirect costs to the economy. For every dollar invested to provide the seven recommended pediatric vaccines, our nation saves \$16.50 in direct and indirect costs. As a result, every year, billions of dollars are saved through this program alone.

Providing at least level funding for the Section 317 program in FY 2012, along with additional funding from the Prevention and Public Health Fund, would give states the ability to continue purchasing needed vaccines, enable states to build a more modern vaccine infrastructure, and ensure that Americans continue to have access to proven cost-effective prevention measures. We greatly appreciate your leadership and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Tom Harkin



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Kirsten E. Gillibrand

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