

June 9, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Members Leahy and Granger:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in strong support of a Health Defense Operations budget designation to increase investments in public health and pandemic preparedness before the next pandemic occurs.

We applaud Congress for your quick response to COVID-19 by providing critical emergency supplemental funding during the pandemic. These investments are necessary to fund the robust response to this health crisis. We believe it is crucial that these investments are leveraged to ensure we are better prepared moving forward. The Health Defense Operations designation would recognize and support the indispensable role key programs play in our national health security.

As a result of supplemental COVID appropriations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now able to invest in depleted state and local public health infrastructure, new laboratory networks, and modernized data systems. Additional CDC funding can boost investment in global health security, as it is now abundantly clear that a health threat is never more than a plane ride away. The National Institutes of Health is using its supplemental funding to conduct early vaccine and therapeutics research to build the basic SARS-CoV-2 knowledge base and develop new rapid and accurate diagnostic tests. The Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority is using its supplemental funding to invest in COVID-19 medical countermeasures by rapidly accelerating the development and manufacturing processes using public-private partnerships. The Strategic National Stockpile is procuring and distributing supplies needed by public health and health care providers all across the country.

These investments will be crucial as agencies begin to take the necessary steps to combat the coronavirus and get our economy back to work. However, as you are aware, these supplemental appropriations are by their very nature temporary. While we believe that there will be a day when we emerge from COVID-19 with safe and effective treatments, we know that this will not be the last infectious disease outbreak. We must ensure that the investments made in our core public health infrastructure and health security programs are maintained and used to prevent the next pandemic.

Public health has suffered from years of underfunding, in part due to the competing priorities within the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Therefore, in order to provide sustainability for these new investments, we urge you to adopt the proposed Health Defense Operations (HDO) Designation model. As described by former CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden in his recent House Labor-HHS testimony, the HDO would exempt specific budget line items from the discretionary budget caps. Congress would of course decide which programs, projects and activities are exempted and will ultimately be responsible for ensuring accountability and transparency.

We all know that the budget request the Administration submits to Congress each year bears little resemblance to the actual needs of many agencies. To ensure Congressional Appropriators have the best information to base their decisions on, we suggest that all programs excepted as part of the HDO be required to submit a professional judgment bypass budget to Congress. The NIH submits three bypass budgets to Congress every year that explain the true resource needs for cancer, HIV/AIDS and Alzheimer's research.

Another infectious disease outbreak will happen. The difference will be whether or not we are caught empty handed. We cannot afford another trillion dollar pandemic, but we can afford to sustain our health defense. We look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead to ensure we are better prepared and are able to build our health defense.

Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Geriatrics Society
American Public Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
America's Blood Centers
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH)
Berean Wellness & Community Support Center
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
Butte County Public Health
Coalition to Stop Flu
Corporate Friends of CDC
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Disability Advocate
Duke University

Future of Life Institute
GHC Global Health Security Roundtable
Global Catastrophic Risk Institute
Global Health Technologies Coalition
Health Industry Distributors Association
HIV Medicine Association
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Biomedical Research Alliance
Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security
Living with Arachnoiditis
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Management Sciences for Health
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
New Hampshire Public Health Association
PATH



Research!America

Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital
Strategies

Sepsis Alliance

Society of Critical Care Medicine

The Alliance for Biosecurity

The American College of Health Care
Administrators

The Gerontological Society of America

The Joint Commission

Training Resources Network, Inc.

Trust for America's Health

UMBoston

University of Maryland School of Public Health

Vaccinate Your Family