

Center for Biosecurity

UPMC | University of Pittsburgh
Medical Center

February 11, 2009

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
US Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Obey
US House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Max Baucus
US Senate
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charlie Rangel
US House of Representatives
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
US Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
US House of Representatives
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
US Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
US House of Representatives
2112 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
US Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dave Camp
US House of Representatives
341 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Conferee:

This letter is to express our support for the inclusion of critical funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1) to help our nation prepare for and respond to the serious threats posed by chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons and by pandemic influenza. We strongly urge your backing for the House funding levels for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund of: \$900 million for the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to support advanced research and development of medical countermeasures against CBRN threats and pandemic influenza; and \$3 billion for prevention and wellness. Providing these funds will stimulate the economy by helping to maintain and create jobs while also improving U.S. national security by protecting the health of Americans against the threats posed by CBRN weapons and pandemic influenza.

CBRN weapons—biological and nuclear weapons in particular—and pandemic influenza represent grave threats to our nation. In November 2008, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) reported that “one of [its] greatest concerns continues to be that terrorist or other malevolent

groups might acquire and employ biological agents, or less likely, a nuclear device, to create mass casualties.”¹ In December 2008, the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Proliferation and Terrorism reported that “unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is more likely than not that a [WMD] will be used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013” and that “terrorists are more likely to be able to obtain and use a biological weapon than a nuclear weapon.”² Meantime, in January 2009, the NIC, in an assessment on the connections between health and US national interests that was “limited to examination of naturally occurring health phenomena,” reported that “for the foreseeable future [infectious diseases] will remain the top health-related threat to US national security” and that the “greatest infectious disease challenge for the US since the beginning of the decade has been the potential emergence of a severe influenza pandemic.”³

The funding for BARDA and public health and wellness is critical for national security and to protect the health of Americans against the threats posed by CBRN weapons and pandemic influenza. Since 2001, the nation has made great strides in preparing for CBRN threats, pandemic influenza, and other public health emergencies. However, much work remains to be done and inadequate funding and the economic downturn threaten to halt progress and even reverse hard earned gains in preparedness.

The nation currently lacks the medical countermeasures, such as medicines and vaccines, necessary to protect the nation from CBRN weapons and pandemic influenza. Providing BARDA with \$900 million to support advanced research and development of medical countermeasures against CBRN threats and pandemic influenza will enable it to further its mission—in particular with respect to CBRN threats, which have been severely under-funded to date. Withholding this funding will seriously compromise BARDA’s success. This funding also will have a stimulative effect on the economy by supporting the maintenance and creation of jobs in the biotech and pharmaceutical industries. These are high-wage jobs that help the United States maintain its competitive edge in the global biotechnology industry.

Gains made in public health preparedness since 2001 are seriously threatened by severe workforce shortages. State and local health departments have lost over 11,000 jobs in the last year and are projected to lose an additional 10,000 jobs next year. The \$3 billion for prevention and wellness will help to restore lost jobs and to prevent projected future job losses. This, in turn, will help prevent gains in public health preparedness from slipping away and return momentum to preparedness efforts. Furthermore, supporting public health agencies provides a critical safety net for individuals who lose their health coverage as a result of unemployment and economic hardship. As unemployment rates soar, unemployed workers and their families will turn to state

¹ *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (NIC 2008-003). Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council. November 2008 http://www.dni.gov/nic/PDF_2025/2025_Global_Trends_Final_Report.pdf. Accessed February 10, 2009.

² *World at Risk*. Washington, DC: Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism. December 2008. <http://documents.scribd.com/docs/15bq1nrl9aerfu0yu9qd.pdf>. Accessed February 10, 2009.

³ *Strategic Implications of Global Health (ICA 2008-10D)*. Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council. December 2008. http://www.dni.gov/nic/PDF_GIF_otherprod/ICA_Global_Health_2008.pdf. Accessed February 10, 2008.

and local health departments and community-based organizations for basic health services, such as immunizations and preventive services, that are provided free of charge to those who cannot afford them.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act affords an opportunity to improve national security and stimulate the economy by strengthening our investment in medical countermeasure development, health infrastructure, and preparedness workforce while also building stronger, healthier communities. Our nation needs a robust and consistent effort to prepare for and respond to the threats posed by CBRN weapons and pandemic influenza and a healthy and productive population to meet the challenges of the future. We ask that you include at least \$900 million for BARDA to support advanced research and development of medical countermeasures against CBRN threats and pandemic influenza and \$3 billion for prevention and wellness in the final version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas V. Inglesby".

Thomas V. Inglesby, MD
Deputy Director/COO
Center for Biosecurity of UPMC