



May 14, 2024

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-ED
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-ED
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Moore Capito:

As you begin consideration of Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations legislation, we ask that you provide robust funding for a comprehensive federal response to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), commensurate with the threat AMR poses to patient care, public health and preparedness. We must continue to improve our defenses against this escalating health crisis. We are encouraged that the President's Budget Request for FY25 prioritizes AMR, including a proposal to strengthen antibiotic research and development through the use of federal contracts that delink payments for novel antimicrobials from volume.

Antimicrobial resistance is rendering lifesaving medicines ineffective, jeopardizing medical procedures that rely on antibiotics, including cancer chemotherapy, transplantation, caesarian sections, other surgeries, treatment of serious wounds and burns, and care of complex patients. According to CDC, AMR has a disproportionate impact on certain communities due to variance in risk of exposure, susceptibility to infection or treatment received.¹

Drug-resistant infections impact more than 3 million individuals and kill nearly 50,000 people annually in the U.S. Infections are a primary or associated cause of death in 50% of patients with cancer, as AMR can make these infections difficult or impossible to treat.² According to a 2022 CDC report, the rates of drug-resistant infections in the U.S. is skyrocketing. U.S. antimicrobial-resistant infections and deaths in hospitals rose 15% in 2020. The burden of resistance is likely much higher, but our surveillance is not able to capture the full picture and the pandemic worsened data gaps. In 2019, almost 1.3 million deaths worldwide were directly caused by AMR. If we do not act now, by 2050 antibiotic resistant infections will be the leading cause of death globally – surpassing cancer – and could cost the world \$100 trillion.⁵

It is estimated that 30 to 50 percent of antibiotic prescriptions are inappropriate. Preserving the effectiveness of antibiotics, by reducing overuse and misuse, must be prioritized. The pipeline of new antibiotics in development is insufficient to meet patient needs. The imminent collapse of the antibiotic market is exacerbating this threat, and small companies that are responsible for nearly all current antibiotic innovation are facing bankruptcy because factors unique to antibiotics, including the need for judicious use, make it challenging for companies to earn a return on investments in antibiotic research and development.

Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR)

- **Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, Broad Spectrum Antimicrobials and CARB-X:** The BARDA broad spectrum antimicrobials program and CARB-X leverage public-private partnerships to develop innovative products that prevent, detect, and treat resistant infections. These efforts have led to new FDA approved antibiotics. Despite this progress, the pipeline of new antibiotics in development is insufficient to meet patient needs and robust funding is needed to prevent a post-antibiotic era.
- **Project BioShield Special Reserve Fund (SRF), Broad Spectrum Antimicrobials:** The Project BioShield SRF is positioned to support the response to public health threats, including AMR. BARDA and NIAID efforts have been successful in helping companies bring new antibiotics to market, but those companies now struggle to stay in business and two filed for bankruptcy in 2019, with others on similar trajectories. In December 2019, SRF funds supported a contract for a company following approval of its antibiotic—a phase in which small biotechs that develop new antibiotics are particularly vulnerable. In October 2022, a second contract was awarded through Project BioShield to support the development and procurement of a novel antimicrobial product that addresses multi-drug resistant infections and supports national preparedness efforts.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- **Antibiotic Resistance Solutions Initiative:** Full funding to bolster antibiotic stewardship across the continuum of care, double state and local grant awards, expand the AR Laboratory Network globally and domestically to strengthen the identification, tracking and containment of deadly pathogens, support AMR research and epicenters, and increase public and health care professional education and awareness. Congress's investments in the program are making a difference but additional resources are necessary to escalate the fight against AMR.
- **National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN):** Full funding is needed to modernize and automate NHSN to alleviate reporting burden and speed access to actionable data. Funding would bolster data collection on antibiotic use and resistance in healthcare

facilities, and provide technical support for more than 65,000 users of NHSN.

- **Advanced Molecular Detection Initiative:** Funding would ensure continued innovation in the detection and tracking of existing and emerging pathogens. Funding would also enable federal, state, and local public health laboratories to expand the use of pathogen genomics, sustain important partnerships with academic research institutions, and bolster training to ensure integration of genomics into infectious disease surveillance and response, including resistant pathogens.
- **Division of Global Health Protection:** Full robust funding is needed to improve global capacity to identify and stop threats before they reach U.S. soil as well as address growing drug resistance in low-income countries. Specifically, funding would enhance infectious disease surveillance, strengthen laboratory capacity, train health care workers and epidemiologists and support emergency operations centers. CDC experts provide technical assistance to 30 countries and work to detect resistant threats; prevent and contain resistance germs; and improve antibiotic use.

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

- **National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases:** Full funding would support the training of new investigators, and strengthen our nation's clinical trial infrastructure to boost preparedness. NIAID also helps to enhance basic, translational, and clinical research on mechanisms of resistance, therapeutics, diagnostics, and support the development of a clinical trials network to reduce barriers to research on difficult-to-treat infections.

There is an urgent need for continued action on antimicrobial resistance. We urge you to prioritize robust, full funding for AMR as the FY2025 appropriations process moves forward.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
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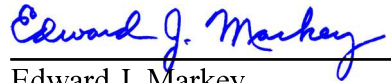
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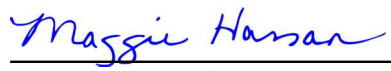
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