



American Hospital
Association

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June 2, 2006

The Honorable Gordon Smith
United States Senate
404 Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA) and our 4,800 member hospitals, health care systems and other health care organizations, and our 35,000 individual members, I am writing to express our support for your bipartisan legislation, the *All-Hazards Public Health Emergency and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act*.

America's hospitals are committed to providing quality care to the patients and communities they serve. Part of that commitment means not only continuing to provide everyday care for their communities but also preparing for natural and man-made disasters. Emergency readiness requires a significant investment in hospital staff and resources. But the ability to meet these investments is challenged by the significant financial pressures currently facing hospitals.

As first responders in the event of a public health emergency, we appreciate your legislation's acknowledgement that public health emergency preparedness requires the federal government to provide additional resources to hospitals over a sustained period of time. We also strongly support the recognition that responding to a disaster can put hospitals at financial risk. The AHA strongly supports the creation of an emergency fund that will allow responding hospitals to continue to operate in the midst of a crisis.

In addition, as we have learned from recent experiences such as Hurricane Katrina, we need to be prepared in the event of *any* emergency, not just one caused by a bioterrorist attack. Therefore, we support your decision to broaden the focus of the program to include an all-hazards orientation. This will allow federal funding to help hospitals prepare in a more comprehensive manner for a coordinated response to future public health emergencies.



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We look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure the enactment of this legislation. Please call Curtis Rooney at (202) 626-2678 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack

Executive Vice President