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PENNSYLVANIA

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JOINT ECONOMIC

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 13, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Capitol, Room S-128  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Capitol, Room S-146A  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

As you work to finalize Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 appropriations, I urge you to reevaluate funding for pandemic and all-hazards preparedness activities, in particular for the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP).

The news that a nurse who treated the Ebola patient in Texas has now become infected with the virus herself highlights the need for ongoing training and education for health care workers and drills and exercises for hospitals. Without an ongoing commitment to preparing for these events, and the funding to support training activities, we cannot adequately ensure that our health system is ready for Ebola or any other emergency.

The Hospital Preparedness Program is a critical tool in bolstering the ability of our Nation's hospitals to respond to a wide variety of public health threats, including emerging infectious diseases such as Ebola or a new strain of influenza. This program supports hospitals and other stakeholders engaged in planning for a public health emergency, providing dedicated resources for training staff and running drills and exercises. Practicing for these scenarios - learning how to safely don and remove personal protective equipment (PPE), establishing appropriate isolation protocols, and ensuring readiness from the first moments of a response through the end of the emergency and a return to normal operations - are all a part of the Hospital Preparedness Program's goals. The program has also provided a pandemic preparedness checklist for hospitals to use, which includes making sure hospital staff are trained in appropriate use of PPE.

Funding for this program has not recovered to the pre-sequestration level of \$358 million, which is still significantly below the \$375 million authorized by the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act of 2013 (PAHPRA). Expert organizations, including Trust for America's Health, the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University and the

UPMC Center for Health Security, have noted the decrease in HPP funding over the last several years.

In line with the all-hazards approach, PAHPRA updated the HPP to promote better collaboration among public health officials and health care providers, to ensure that the stakeholders in a community are working together to respond to a public health emergency and to build coalitions that can address the full needs of that community in an emergency.

Any response to a serious threat such as Ebola must include input from public health officials, hospitals, community health care providers, emergency responders and others. We must do all we can to promote full collaboration and appropriate planning in order to ensure a robust response, including funding HPP.

In light of the many challenges we are facing in responding to the largest Ebola outbreak in history, I ask that you increase funding for the Hospital Preparedness Program to the authorized level of \$375 million. I thank you for your dedication and hard work in ensuring our Nation's preparedness efforts are funded.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator