

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 2006

SUPPORT FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in sending the following bipartisan letter to Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin to express our support for increased funding for the National Immunization Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, known as the Section 317 program.

Vaccines are critical to saving lives and preventing disease. The Section 317 program provides access to critical immunizations for uninsured and underinsured children and adults, as well as children who are not eligible for the Vaccines for Children (VFC).

We are pleased that the House appropriations committee recently approved an increase for the program in their fiscal year 2007 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. This additional funding is essential as the program is facing unprecedented pressures. A number of new vaccines are being introduced, the recent mumps outbreak in several states, and the possibility of an influenza epidemic are all clear reminders of why sufficient resources to address vaccine preventable diseases are needed.

We hope you will join us in signing the attached letter. If you have any questions or would like to sign the letter, please contact Matt Canedy with Senator Smith at 224-5364 or Lisa German Foster with Senator Reed at 224-4642.

Sincerely,



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate



Jack Reed
United States Senate



Mike DeWine
United States Senate



Richard Durbin
United States Senate

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 2006

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

As your subcommittee prepares to markup the Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07) Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill, we ask that the minimum funding level for the National Immunization Program (NIP) be set at \$614.5 million, the same amount the House appropriations committee recently approved. If additional resources can be identified, we ask that they be directed toward this important initiative so that children and vulnerable adults can continue to have access to life-saving vaccines.

The proliferation of vaccines is one of the most remarkable accomplishments in modern public health. Debilitating and deadly illnesses such as smallpox have been eradicated. Polio is on its way to being eliminated thanks to effective vaccines and public health efforts. Vaccines exist to prevent diseases such as meningitis, shingles, invasive pneumococcal disease and whooping cough. We now have a vaccine to protect against the human papillomavirus, which is known to cause cervical cancer.

Despite our tremendous successes in this area, we still face many challenges. This year's widespread mumps outbreak with over 4,400 reported cases in 14 states--Iowa, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Mississippi, Nebraska, Missouri, South Dakota, New York, Minnesota, Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, and Michigan--is a clear reminder of why sufficient resources to address vaccine preventable diseases are needed. States have used NIP funding to conduct vaccination clinics, track and notify contacts of infected individuals, and inform the public and health professionals about ways to protect themselves and others from developing mumps.

The NIP, or the "Section 317" program, is key to increasing vaccination rates among children and adults. It ensures that children who are not eligible for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program and who cannot otherwise afford immunization can be vaccinated. It also provides limited access to immunizations for uninsured and underinsured adults. Unfortunately, the Section 317 program is not receiving sufficient funding to carry out its essential public health mission. We need our nation's children to be fully vaccinated so that they are less vulnerable to the risks of preventable diseases. That is why we are asking for the NIP to receive the funding it

needs to ensure access to cost-effective prevention measures once they become available and are endorsed by the public health and medical communities.

Thank you for your past leadership and support of efforts to extend access to life-saving vaccines for both children and vulnerable adults. We hope that you will look favorably upon our request to allocate at least \$614.5 million to the National Immunization Program next fiscal year and provide additional funding if available.

Warm Regards,



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate



Jack Reed
United States Senate



Mike DeWine
United States Senate



Richard Durbin
United States Senate