



May 25, 2006

The Honorable Evan Bayh
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bayh:

On behalf of Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting the health of every community and making disease prevention a national priority, thank you for providing leadership in protecting our nation's health by your introduction of the All-Hazards Public Health and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act.

More than four years after the September 11, 2001 tragedies, Trust for America's Health (TFAH) finds that state and federal preparedness for major health emergencies must still be accelerated in order to adequately protect the American people. While progress has been made in the nation's ability to respond to public health emergencies, vulnerabilities still remain.

Our recent report, *Ready or Not? 2005 – Protecting the Public's Health from Diseases, Disasters, and Bioterrorism*, urges an improved, strategic "all-hazards" system for protecting the public's health, capable of responding effectively to health threats posed by diseases, disasters, and bioterrorism. The report recommends improved accountability for all levels of government through concrete performance measures along with required testing of preparedness efforts and correctional measures. It also recommends clarifying the federal leadership structure and increasing oversight of bioterrorism and public health preparedness efforts. We are pleased that your legislation addresses many of these recommendations.

Introduction of your legislation is an important step toward preparing for public health emergencies like bioterrorism. This legislation expands current bioterrorism preparedness assessments to include public health threats from natural disasters, disease outbreaks and terrorist attacks. It requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to issue and annually update assessment tools and performance standards and it holds grantees accountable for meeting these standards. The legislation also establishes an Assistant Secretary for Public Health to be a centralized authority for federal public health emergency management and preparation.

Again I want to commend your leadership and thank you for introducing this important public health legislation. TFAH looks forward to working with you on this and other important public health initiatives in the future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Richard Hamburg at (202) 223-9876 or Jeremy Sharp at (202) 223-9870 x203.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Levi, PhD
Executive Director