

December 11, 2007

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Clinton and Roberts:

The undersigned organizations join in thanking you for your leadership in protecting our nation's health. By introducing the *Influenza Vaccine Security Act of 2007*, you address one of the most critical issues confronting the public's health in the United States -- the challenge of ensuring an adequate and timely influenza vaccine supply. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the seasonal flu claims as many as 36,000 lives each year and results in more than 200,000 hospitalizations. These numbers could skyrocket in the case of an influenza pandemic.

The introduction of the *Influenza Vaccine Security Act* is an important step toward improving the U.S. response to outbreaks of seasonal flu. Among its provisions, the legislation provides incentives to manufacturers to enter the U.S. flu vaccine market and expand production capacity, increases funding for vaccine research and development, and increases flu surveillance and outreach, coordination, and education. Also, public health officials must have the flexibility to provide the medication where outbreaks are most severe. Your bill provides the Secretary of Health and Human Services with the ability to prioritize vaccine distribution to high-risk populations and to ensure geographic equity.

In addition to preparation for seasonal flu, the legislation takes important steps to prevent and respond to a severe flu pandemic. We applaud the emphasis on outreach, as the efficient, widespread distribution of seasonal flu vaccines would allow healthcare providers to conduct exercises to prepare for the event of a severe flu pandemic. In addition, the provision allowing unused vaccines to be redeployed to state and local health departments for mass vaccination exercises will also be useful in preparation for an influenza pandemic. Finally, allowing the Secretary to purchase antiviral medications and N-95 respirator masks and encouraging stockpiling of pediatric countermeasures will be critical to treating and minimizing the effects of a pandemic influenza outbreak.

Prevention is the key to protecting and saving American lives from seasonal flu outbreaks. Again, we want to commend your leadership and thank you for introducing this very important public health bill.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Center for Biosecurity, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy
Immunization Coalition of Washington, DC
Service Employees International Union
Trust for America's Health