



September 4, 2007

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
United States Senate
248 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Hagel and Durbin:

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, I commend your leadership through introduction of S. 1882, the Public Health Preparedness Workforce Development Act of 2007. This bill would assist in the recruitment and retention of public health professionals.

Public health professionals are a critical component of our public health system, especially during an emergency situation, when it is essential that we have a well-trained and robust public health workforce. Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, nurses and other health professionals from around the country traveled to the Gulf Coast region to assist hurricane victims. However, such assistance would not be possible in all circumstances, as public health emergencies are not always confined to a specific area. A pandemic flu or other infectious disease outbreak could affect many areas simultaneously and place a great strain on the public health workforce, especially in medically underserved areas. As a result, it is very important that all areas of the country have an adequate public health workforce in order to conduct ongoing surveillance and testing and provide surge capacity during a public health emergency.

S. 1882 would establish a Public Health Workforce Scholarship Program, as well as a Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program. TFAH is very supportive of these financial incentives for public health professionals. As baby boomers retire, it is necessary to recruit and retain the next generation of public health professionals, and this bill is a positive step toward achieving that end.

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, our Director of Government Relations, at (202) 223-9876.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi".

Jeffrey Levi, PhD
Executive Director