



March 10, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro Chairwoman
House Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole Ranking Member
House Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole,

As members of the Adult Vaccine Access Coalition (AVAC), we write to ask for full funding of immunization-related activities at the Department of Health and Human Services as part of the fiscal year (FY) 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS), and Education Appropriations bill.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us of the importance of fully funding immunization efforts. Vaccines help us mitigate diseases, prevent severe illnesses, and reduce rates of hospitalization, morbidity, and mortality. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a catastrophic toll on our society. The rollout of safe and effective coronavirus vaccines signals a light at the end of the tunnel but there are still important steps that Congress needs to take to ensure success of the nation's COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan. The pandemic has also introduced new challenges to our health care system that have resulted in a significant reduction in routine vaccination rates across the life course.

It is critical that the LHHS appropriations bill includes sustainable funding for immunization efforts, including long-term investments in immunization infrastructure, including immunization information systems, vaccine confidence campaigns, and support for health care providers. Immunizations are a sound investment because they are a highly cost-effective form of preventive medicine that help save lives by protecting the health and wellbeing of individuals and families in communities nationwide. Vaccines not only help protect the immunized person but they can also help protect those around them who may not be able to be immunized because they are too young to be vaccinated or suffer from a health condition that prevents them from being immunized. We ask the Committee to strongly support the following programs in the FY22 LHHS bill:

\$1.13 billion for the National Immunization Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) (+\$400m). The immunization program at CDC provides funding to state and local

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health departments to carry out a variety of activities vital to the prevention, detection, and mitigation of vaccine-preventable conditions. These essential grants are utilized not only for the purchase of vaccines, but also support a number of other important infrastructure activities, including: surveillance, safety and effectiveness studies, education and outreach, implementation of evidence-based community interventions to increase immunization coverage among underserved and high-risk populations, and vaccine-preventable disease outbreak response. The resources provided under the immunization program are vital to communities across the country, many of whom rely solely on these funds to support their immunization activities.

The work of the immunization program has become even more necessary as part of the sustained COVID-19 vaccination campaign. However, COVID-19 has also exposed weaknesses in the immunization infrastructure, including a lack of adult data in the immunization information systems (IIS), vaccine hesitancy, and disparities in vaccination rates. On top of the COVID-19 pandemic, disease outbreaks – including measles, Hepatitis A, and Hepatitis B—are on the rise and investments must be made to restore vaccination rates for routine immunizations back to pre-pandemic levels.

Fortunately, most health departments already have infrastructure in place but it is imperative that Congress invest in modernizing and take steps to sustain these important investments even once the immediate threats of the pandemic. **Providing \$1.13 Billion in FY22 will go a long way to strengthen the immunization infrastructure, vaccinate against COVID-19, and to restore vaccination rates for routine immunizations back to pre-pandemic levels.**

\$241 million for Influenza Planning and Response at CDC's NCIRD (+\$40m).

CDC's Influenza Planning and Response programs help to protect the United States from seasonal influenza and pandemic influenza. Each winter, influenza causes millions of illnesses and hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations. The 2017-2018 season was especially dangerous with an estimated 61,000 Americans having died from influenza and its complications. During the 2018-2019 season, an estimated 35.5 million people got sick with influenza and 34,200 people died. **Providing \$241 million for the program will ensure CDC has the resources necessary to address the continual threats posed by seasonal and pandemic influenza.**

\$134 million for CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis (+\$94.5m).

In 2021, the National Viral Hepatitis Strategic Plan called for the elimination of hepatitis A, B, and C as public health threats in the United States. There is currently a large-scale outbreak of HAV, resulting in an 850% increase in cases¹. HAV and HBV have a safe and highly effective vaccine that can prevent infection. Yet only 25% of adults are vaccinated for HBV, representing a lost opportunity to prevent HBV infection. Chronic HBV requires life-long medical care, as there is no cure. **Providing \$134 million to expand adoption of CDC/United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations for HBV and HCV testing, HBV vaccination, and linkage to care.**

\$10 million for the National Vaccine Program within the Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP).

The National Vaccine Program at HHS provides strategic leadership and coordination of vaccine and immunization activities among federal agencies and other stakeholders

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/2018surveillance/Introduction.htm>

whose mandate is to help reduce the burden of preventable infectious disease. This portfolio includes the National Vaccine Plan and National Vaccine Advisory Committee. Providing a \$10 Million investment will be especially important for the work this office does around vaccine equity, confidence and safety. These funds will be essential in securing future implementation of the National Vaccine Strategic Plan, a comprehensive roadmap in the development and use of vaccines across the life course in the United States.

Now more than ever, sustained and predictable, funding for the CDC immunization programs is vital, to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic, to increase routine vaccination rates and to prepare for future pandemics. We look forward to working with your office as the FY22 appropriations process gets underway. For further information, please contact the AVAC managers at info@adultvaccinesnow.org.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of Family Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Heart Association
American Immunization Registry Association
American Pharmacists Association
American Public Health Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Occupational Health Nurses
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
Dynavax
Families Fighting Flu
GSK
Hep B United
Hepatitis B Foundation
Hepatitis Education Project
Immunization Action Coalition
Immunization Coalition of Washington, DC
Infectious Diseases Society of America
March of Dimes
Medicago
Merck
Moderna
National Association of City and County Health Officials
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Black Nurses Association
National Consumers League
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

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National Minority Quality Forum
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
Novavax
Pfizer
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STC Health
Takeda Vaccines
The AIDS Institute
The Gerontological Society of America
Trust for America's Health
Vaccinate Your Family
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease

Cc: Members of the United States House of Representatives

