

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

## **Immunization Funding:** **Deadline to sign on Thursday, May 18, 2006**

May 10, 2006

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in sending the following bipartisan letter to Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey to express our support for increased funding for the National Immunization Program, known as the Section 317 Program.

Vaccines are critical to saving lives and preventing disease. The Section 317 Immunization program provides vaccinations for uninsured and underinsured children and adults, including children who are not eligible for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and who cannot otherwise afford immunization.

This program is facing unprecedented pressures, as a number of new vaccines are being introduced and recommended to fight diseases once thought to be out of reach of prevention efforts, such as the pneumococcal disease, meningitis, rotovirus gastroenteritis, and pertussis. And never has there been a time when vaccines are more critical as we brace for the possibility of a pandemic flu outbreak.

We encourage you to support this important funding by signing the attached letter. If you have questions or would like to sign the letter, please contact Stephen Ham in Rep. Hoyer's office at 5-4131 or Mo Zilly in Rep. Shimkus' office at 5-5271.

Sincerely,



REP. JOHN SHIMKUS



REP. STENY H. HOYER

MAY XXXX, 2006

The Honorable Ralph Regula  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health & Human Services, and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health & Human Services, and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Regula and Congressman Obey:

As your Subcommittee prepares to mark up the FY 2007 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill, we ask that the House support increased funding for the "section 317" (of the Public Health Service Act) immunization program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Vaccines are one of the great success stories in public health and are among the most cost-effective health interventions. With the advent of new technologies, an unprecedented number of new vaccines are being introduced and recommended to fight diseases once thought to be out of reach of prevention efforts. New vaccines have recently become available to prevent severe diseases like invasive pneumococcal disease, meningitis and rotavirus gastroenteritis and to boost immunity to pertussis (or whooping cough). Vaccines likely to become available in the near future will offer protection against shingles and human papilloma virus, the latter of which causes cervical cancer. In addition to these new vaccines, recommendations for both the hepatitis A and seasonal flu vaccines have recently been broadened.

The section 317 immunization program is a key program for vaccinating 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 some 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. Never has there been a time when vaccines are more critical as we brace for the possibility of a pandemic flu outbreak. We need our nation's children to be fully vaccinated so that they are less vulnerable to the risks of preventable diseases. Given the years and enormous investment required to bring new vaccines to the public, it is imperative that we ensure access to these cost-effective, disease prevention measures once they become available and recommended by the medical community.

Further complicating the budget situation, the President's Budget request proposes a significant reduction in funding for the *discretionary* section 317 program on the assumption that statutory changes will be made to expand the *mandatory* VFC program. However, this change to the VFC program has yet to be considered by the House during the past four years in which it has been proposed. The result of this proposal is to "short" the appropriation request for the section 317 immunization program by \$100 million.

Please join us in ensuring that all have children have access to life-saving vaccines.