

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2017

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriation Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The federal government should be prepared to fight emerging infectious diseases as quickly as possible.

Therefore, as you begin work on the fiscal year 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services funding bill, we respectfully ask that you provide \$300 million in reserve funding for the federal government to be able to immediately access to contain and eradicate future infectious disease epidemics.

According to Dr. Thomas Frieden, an infectious disease expert and the former head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “in a public health emergency, speed is critical. A day, a week, a month, can make all of the difference... Three months in an epidemic is an eternity.”

In the last decade alone, we have faced serious threats from H1N1 in 2009, MERS in 2012, Ebola in 2014, and of course the deadly Zika virus last year. Even worse, many have forewarned of future epidemics that could be spread by airborne transmission and therefore be far more contagious than Ebola or Zika.

And just last month Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases warned that the African yellow fever epidemic could soon spread to the United States.

Furthermore, many experts have concluded that the world will face new infectious diseases with rising frequency due to the increased globalization of people, travel and food. As Ron Klain, the previous administration’s Ebola Response Coordinator, famously asserted, “From now on, dangerous epidemics are going to be a regular fact of life” – a scary thought to say the least.

This is not only an urgent public health concern, it is a matter of national security. As former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper noted, “infectious diseases and vulnerabilities in

the global supply chain for medical countermeasures will continue to pose a danger to U.S. national security.”

A fund for federal emergency response is not a new concept. In fact, for over four decades, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has drawn on the Disaster Relief Fund to help Americans quickly recover from hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters. These funds allow FEMA to coordinate relief efforts and provide immediate aid and support to those affected.

The federal government should have a similar dedicated source of funding immediately available to mobilize a response to infectious disease outbreaks here in the U.S.

We cannot afford to be caught flatfooted or constrained in our ability to respond and provide aid in a timely and comprehensive manner when the next public health crisis emerges.

While it was never signed into law, we were encouraged to see that your subcommittee included funding for a similar reserve last year. We thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

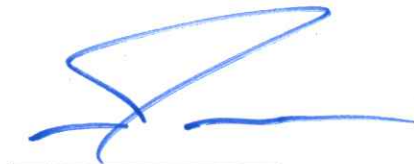
Sincerely,



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress




Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



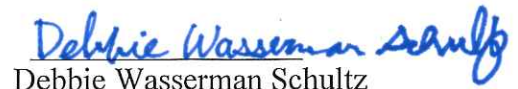
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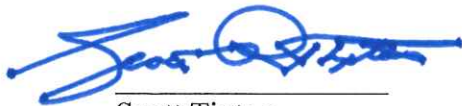
Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



Francis Rooney
Member of Congress



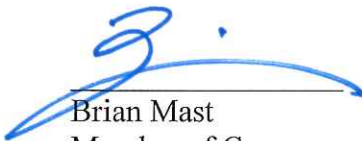
Frederica S. Wilson
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Scott Tipton
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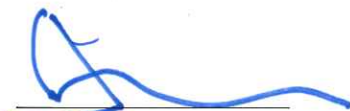
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