

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 6, 2015

Dear Colleague:

We believe that the best way to combat public health outbreaks and emergencies is before they arise. Recent events have reminded us of the key role that the federal government plays in identifying and preventing public health threats. The Prevention and Public Health Fund (the Fund or PPHF), is the federal government's single largest investment in prevention. Supporting the detection of and response to outbreaks while addressing leading causes of death is an investment that saves lives.

Last year's domestic Ebola cases served as an important reminder about the need to develop, implement, and sustain active early warning alert and surveillance response systems to better identify and control the spread of infectious diseases. Such systems can help prevent and control emerging threats, while also managing common infections and diseases including the seasonal flu, measles, and HIV/AIDS.

The Fund supports an array of innovative, evidence-based initiatives that are helping to detect and halt the spread of health threats. These initiatives include the following:

- **Detecting and Preventing the Spread of Measles:** In 2014, the largest U.S. measles outbreak in recent memory occurred among the Amish community in central Ohio. The Ohio Department of Health worked closely with local health departments to investigate the measles outbreak and determine the sources of the outbreak. Surveillance data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated that Ohio's measles vaccination rate was among the lowest in the country. As a result, the affected counties implemented an emergency management infrastructure to ensure common messaging, make vaccination clinics available, and monitor the outbreak. Because of the widespread nature of the outbreak, coordination across counties was critical. This response was enabled, in part, by \$3.34 million in grants awarded from the Fund to support the prevention, detection, and response to infectious disease outbreaks in the State of Ohio.
- **Investigating and Limiting the Spread of Listeria:** Earlier this year, a multi-state Listeria outbreak linked to various dairy products was reported in four states – Arizona, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. State and local health officials, the CDC, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) collaborated to investigate the outbreak. The Fund, through Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Grants, helps support these state health departments to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks, including those caused by influenza and foodborne pathogens. Collectively, the State Departments of Health in Arizona, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas have received more than \$9.36 million in ELC grants to support public health surveillance initiatives since FY 2010.
- **Tracking and Combatting Healthcare-Associated Infections:** According to data from the CDC, nearly 1 in 25 hospital patients has at least one healthcare-associated infection (HAI). The PPHF is helping states prevent and contain HAIs by coordinating and implementing state prevention plans, promoting antibiotic stewardship, and supporting partnerships among healthcare facilities to prevent extremely drug resistant infections. In Wyoming, the PPHF supported an HAI prevention coordinator to lead a statewide effort to reduce HAIs, facilitating a state multidisciplinary advisory group, helping infection control practitioners use CDC's electronic reporting system, and leading to progress in all areas of HAI infection prevention. In 2013, Wyoming hospitals reported catheter-associated UTI (CAUTI) rates 47 percent lower compared to the 2009 national baseline rates.

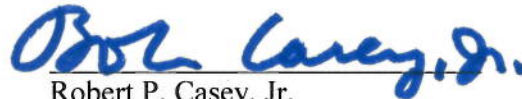
- **Preparing for Ebola and Other Potential Outbreaks:** The outbreak in West Africa represents the largest Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in the modern era. Even though only a few Ebola cases were reported in the United States, the public health and healthcare communities are implementing strategies to monitor and respond to the threat of Ebola – and other contagious viruses – domestically. A cooperative grant program, the National Laboratory Biosafety for Ebola and Other Highly Infectious Diseases, funded in part by the PPHF, is helping public health laboratories prepare and strengthen their capacity to handle Ebola and other highly infectious diseases by: 1) enhancing public health laboratory biosafety capacity, and 2) improving laboratory coordination and outreach.

In the twenty-first century, it is easy to overlook the role played by surveillance and detection in our nation's public health safety system. As we look at next fiscal year's budget, we must continue to build a strong public health system to prevent, detect, and respond to disease outbreaks as we continue to tackle the challenges of emerging infections and epidemics. This is why we ask for your support for the Prevention and Public Health Fund, and the critical investments it makes in our communities.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
U.S. Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
U.S. Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
U.S. Senator



Patty Murray  
U.S. Senator



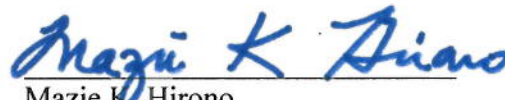
Richard Blumenthal  
U.S. Senator



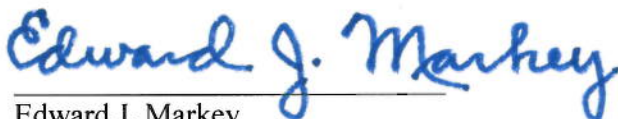
Barbara Boxer  
U.S. Senator



Al Franken  
U.S. Senator



Mazie Hirono  
U.S. Senator



Edward J. Markey  
U.S. Senator



Tom Udall  
U.S. Senator