October 23, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

As representatives of the medical, public health, and sustainable agriculture communities, the undersigned organizations are writing to urge you to direct your Administration to take swift action to end antibiotic overuse and misuse in food animal production. Specifically, we ask that you direct the Office of Management and Budget to finalize Food and Drug Administration Guidance #213 and issue a proposed rule on the Veterinary Feed Directive this fall, in order to initiate the three-year phase-out of growth promotion and production-related uses of antibiotics, and to move to the necessary next steps as required to protect public health.

FDA recognized as early as 1977 that nontherapeutic uses of medically-important antibiotics in livestock feed threaten human health. Soon after antibiotics were discovered, producers of livestock and poultry began using drugs like penicillin and tetracycline as a matter of routine to spur animal growth rates and to enable crowding of animals and poultry to facilitate more efficient production. But, as Alexander Fleming warned, misuse and overuse of antibiotics only enables bacteria to become stronger and survive to reproduce. World health leaders issued strong warnings through the Swann Report in 1969 calling for an end to growth promoting uses. Since that time hundreds of peer-reviewed studies have been published that confirm the connection between drug use on the farm and superbugs in people.

Since FDA acknowledged the human health risk from antibiotic overuse in the 1970s, the call for action from the public health community and consumers has grown more urgent. This is why we appreciate the steps the Administration has taken to initiate new policies to address antibiotic overuse in agriculture. While we believe enforceable requirements are needed to guarantee an end to non-medically necessary uses of antibiotics in food animals, we recognize the potential for the guidance approach to benefit public health as long as certain fundamental principles are upheld: 1) it must clearly limit the use of antibiotics for disease prevention in animals to prevent misuse; and 2) it should include a plan to monitor and report to the public on progress in reducing antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance. We appreciate FDA’s careful consideration of these priorities and look forward to working with the agency to maximize the guidance’s benefits.
Please direct your administration to finalize a strong FDA Guidance #213 and propose a veterinary feed rule as soon as possible. Thank you again for your commitment to address the critical public health threat of antibiotic resistance. Your leadership can help save the effectiveness of antibiotics in treating dangerous human illnesses.

Sincerely,

Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Public Health Association
Center for Food Safety
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Consumers Union
Environmental Working Group
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food & Water Watch
Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT)
Health Care Without Harm
Healthy Food Action
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Keep Antibiotics Working
League of United Latin American Citizens
March of Dimes
National Consumers League
National Research Center for Women & Families / Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund
Natural Resources Defense Council
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Physicians for Social Responsibility
San Francisco Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists
Trust for America’s Health
Union of Concerned Scientists