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March 16, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chair, Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Harkin:

We are writing to address an urgent issue regarding the proposed budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Under the proposed budget, the agency's already inadequate Antimicrobial Resistance budget would be cut \$8.6 million. This 50 percent reduction comes at a time when CDC activities to combat the rising crisis of drug resistance are needed more than ever to control national security issues related to emerging infectious diseases and bioterrorism.

Antibiotic resistance is a serious patient safety, public health, and national security issue. It is recognized as one of the top three public health threats by the U.S. CDC, WHO and FDA. The proliferation of superbugs is complicating treatment of every known infection in US healthcare facilities and households. While drug-resistant bacteria may originate in hospitals, it now affects an increasing number of people in many community settings, including healthy athletes and children. A recent APUA study estimates antibiotic-resistant infections (ARIs) cost the U.S. healthcare system in excess of \$20 billion annually. The medical costs attributed to these ARIs ranged from \$18,588 to \$29,069 per patient, while the duration of hospital stay was extended 6.4 – 12.7 days for affected patients. Additionally, the excess mortality attributed to ARIs alone was 6.5% – a death rate two-fold higher than in patients without ARIs.

We urge you to increase funding for CDC's antimicrobial resistance activities to at least \$40 million in FY2011 and provide CDC with the necessary funding to reduce the emergence of resistance and slow the spread of deadly drug resistant infections.

We thank you in advance for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us any time. We appreciate your leadership in "preserving the power of antibiotics."

Sincerely,

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cc: Members of the Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee