



October 16, 2009

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The nation's State and local governmental laboratories performing testing of public health significance and their association, the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), strongly urge you to ensure that the provisions for the public health workforce development and support for core public health infrastructure be included in the final version of health reform legislation agreed to by Congress. These provisions address the health of the American people by enhancing the nation's governmental public health workforce and through prevention and wellness. Investing in State and local public health laboratories is critical to the health and wellness of the American people both in times of outbreaks of infectious diseases and in advancing prevention.

The legislative language contained in Title III and Title IV of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) and Section C of the House Energy and Commerce health care reform measures set the stage for real improvement in prevention and wellness, and in the governmental public health workforce. Mandatory funding is the only way to assure the successful implementation of the concepts contained in these sections.

The outbreak of H1N1 influenza this spring highlighted many of the continuing and unparalleled challenges faced by the nation's State and local public health laboratories today. The unhappy confluence of years of minimal funding from all levels of government, an aging scientific workforce with few replacements in the pipeline and the burden of dramatic funding reductions because of the impact of the economic downturn on governmental revenues could have dealt a crippling blow to public health laboratory operations and the public's health. Fortunately, substantial planning and the wise use of minimal funding support averted that calamity – but we may not be so fortunate to have only one major outbreak of disease in the future.

APHL also joins the leadership of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) in urging your support of provisions in the Senate HELP bill that enhance state and local public health infrastructure to improve the nation's capacity for rapid detection and response to emerging infectious diseases such as H1N1. Specifically, Sec. 335, Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grants, authorizes a CDC program that has been seriously eroding over the past six years. Sec. 445, Fellowship Training in Public Health, authorizes four CDC public health fellowship training programs to provide a pipeline for the

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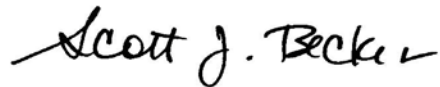
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next generation of leaders in governmental epidemiology and laboratory science. These disciplines are rapidly losing numbers due to many factors such as demographics.

The HELP and Energy and Commerce bills present a bright light on the horizon for State and local public health laboratories, and they are desperate for the benefits it will provide when enacted into law. We urge your support for these critical sections of the bills and stand ready to assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott J. Becker" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott J. Becker, MS  
Executive Director

