



ADVOCACY GROUP COMMENDS INTRODUCTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2004

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Washington, DC, July 7, 2004 – Trust for America’s Health (TFAH) commends U.S. Senators Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) for introducing “The Public Health Preparedness Workforce Development Act of 2004” today.

“The future of our public’s health is contingent on recruiting a new generation of workers. An effective, responsive public health workforce is vital to our homeland security, disease prevention, lowering health care costs, and improving our national quality of life,” said Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of TFAH. “We are on the brink of a crisis of care. Hopefully the leadership demonstrated by Senators Hagel and Durbin by introducing this bill will inspire students to embark on a rewarding career path that will also protect the health of communities across the country.”

- A 2003 report by the Institute of Medicine found that public health agencies are severely understaffed in the areas of public health nursing, environmental health specialists, health educators, epidemiologists, and administrative personnel. This report also found that the public health system currently lacks the resources and funding to offer salaries that compete with the private sector and is not training workers rapidly enough to replace retiring professionals.
- A March 2003 survey by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists echoed these concerns, finding almost half of the epidemiologists in state health departments have no training in their area of specialty.
- And, an April 2003 report on bioterrorism preparedness by the Government Accounting Office noted that “staffing shortages are a major concern” and that the demands on new emergency planning activities often divert time from the “usual activities” of public health workforce staffers.

“This bill represents a promise of better health for Americans and better opportunities for public health professionals,” Hearne said.

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Trust for America’s Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority. www.healthyamericans.org