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Labor, HHS Appropriations Bill Short on Biosecurity Preparedness Funds

Lessons from Anthrax and Ebola: Being Prepared Means Being Ready Before the Crisis Hits

The Alliance for Biosecurity appreciates the subcommittee's support for developing medical countermeasures at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, as well as the increase in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention included in the House Appropriations subcommittee draft FY 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill. However, level funding for key biosecurity preparedness programs does not prepare us to counter known national security threats.

First, level funding for the procurement of medical countermeasures under the Project BioShield Special Reserve Fund (SRF) is unsustainable. According to the Obama Administration's five-year biodefense budget, SRF procurements totaling \$646 million, an increase of \$400 million over 2015, must be made in 2016 to ensure our nation is protected from threats such as anthrax, smallpox, Ebola, and radiological and nuclear threats. The draft bill proposes to fund the SRF at \$255 million, which would support only a fraction of the needed procurements, leaving our nation vulnerable to these threats, and jeopardizing the future of our nation's biodefense enterprise.

Second, the bill's suggestion of a \$72 million appropriation for pandemic influenza is below the President's request of \$170 million and far below what is necessary to maintain and improve our nation's preparedness capabilities for this high priority threat. Consistent budget shortfalls are undermining our ability to prepare for and respond to top national security threats, as the Department of Health and Human Services noted in its FY 2016 budget request. Without adequate funding for influenza preparedness, the U.S. is left vulnerable to pandemic threats, unable to regularly test response capabilities for known and new pandemic threats or to maintain effective vaccine stockpiles, many of which are five to 10 years old.

Tomorrow, a House appropriations subcommittee will hold a markup of this draft budget, during which the Alliance hopes members will keep in mind the significant threat that underfunding of biosecurity preparedness poses to our national security. It is vital that the U.S. invest in preparedness now, before we face another natural or deliberate threat, so that we are better prepared when a threat arrives.

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The Alliance for Biosecurity is a coalition of biopharmaceutical companies and laboratory/academic partners that promotes a strong public-private partnership to ensure medical countermeasures are available to protect public health and enhance national health security. The Alliance advocates for public policies and funding to support the rapid development, production, stockpiling, and distribution of critically needed medical countermeasures.

For more information, visit the Alliance for Biosecurity website at www.allianceforbiosecurity.org.

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