

April XX, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS, and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS, and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Harkin and Kingston and Ranking Members Moran and DeLauro:

We respectfully request that you support **\$31.5 million for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) and the Prevention Epicenters Program** in the FY 2014 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. These programs should be a priority, even in this climate of limited financial resources, because they are uniquely positioned to protect patients and the public from disease and death related to healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and to detect the transmission of infections that are highly resistant to antibiotics.

HAIs are among the leading causes of preventable harm and death in the United States. CDC estimates that one in 20 hospitalized patients develops an HAI. In addition to the incalculable cost of patient suffering, these infections increase U.S. healthcare expenditures by more than \$30 billion each year because of complications, prolonged hospitalizations, and delayed recovery from the condition for which the patient was originally hospitalized. Our national HAI tracking system, NHSN, along with the Prevention Epicenters research program, are critical tools to address scientific gaps in HAI detection and prevention. NHSN helps us identify HAIs and understand the extent of the HAI problem, while the Prevention Epicenters conduct the research necessary to address scientific gaps regarding prevention of HAIs and help us better target solutions to protect patients from harm.

CDC's efforts to fight antimicrobial resistance are an essential part of our national strategy to protect patients from the threat of potentially untreatable infections. A recent issue of CDC's *Vital Signs* noted that infections due to carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) bacteria that are resistant to nearly all available antibiotics are becoming more common. As reported by CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden, these "nightmare bacteria" kill up to one half of patients who get bloodstream infections from them and have now been reported in 42 states.

NHSN funding will allow CDC to target multidrug-resistant organisms and to measure antibiotic use, which is vital to improving outcomes for patients and reducing healthcare costs.

The high quality and scientifically sound data collected via NHSN are critical to measuring the true extent of the HAI problem. The research conducted by the Prevention Epicenters is essential for developing novel, evidence-based prevention strategies. Fortunately, several HAIs are on the decline as a result of recent advances in the understanding of how to prevent infections. One example is the 41% reduction in central line-associated bloodstream infections over the past four years, which has resulted in 5,000 lives saved and an estimated \$83 million in healthcare costs averted.

We ask that you fund CDC to continue this important work by supporting \$31.5 million for the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) and the Prevention Epicenters program. We thank you for the opportunity to make the case for these strategic programs that improve patient outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.