

February 4, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair  
The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

As you continue to develop the PREVENT Pandemics Act, we urge you to include the text of the bipartisan Bolstering Infectious Outbreaks (BIO) Pandemic Workforce Act (S. 3244) because the eventual success of your legislation depends upon the availability of a fully-staffed, interdisciplinary expert health care workforce focused on bio-preparedness and infectious diseases (ID) in every community.

S. 3244 would establish a new student loan repayment program and is a non-specialty-specific, non-disease specific solution for workforce shortages that severely limit our preparedness. The bill directly addresses financial barriers that prevent health care professionals from pursuing careers in bio-preparedness and infectious disease, including physicians, pharmacists, physician assistants, advanced practice registered nurses, clinical laboratory professionals, infection preventionists and dentists.

Loan repayment would be available to individuals who spend at least 50 percent of their time engaged in bio-preparedness and response activities anywhere in the U.S. or 50 percent of their time providing ID care in medically underserved communities and federally funded facilities. The bill will address the overall shortage and also help increase the number of bio-preparedness and ID professionals from populations underrepresented in health care, as a diverse workforce is critical to promoting health equity and enabling the resiliency of vulnerable communities.

A broad and diverse spectrum of ID and bio-preparedness professionals is vital to a rapid, effective response to ID disease outbreaks and to provide ID care. However, bio-preparedness and infectious diseases health care professionals face significant recruitment challenges and shortages:

- [208 million Americans live in areas with little or no access to an ID physician](#), and the distribution of ID physicians is geographically skewed. Thus, rural Americans are less likely to have access to ID physicians than their urban counterparts.
- Only 70% of ID training programs filled their slots in 2021, far less than other disciplines, and an average [medical student debt](#) of \$241,900 incentivizes entry into more lucrative specialties.
- [25% of health care facilities have reported a vacant infection preventionist position](#), and 40% of the infection preventionist workforce will enter retirement age in the next 10 years.
- Clinical microbiologists, who are central to diagnostic testing, were in short supply prior to the current pandemic and the shortage has worsened. Results of a [survey](#) published in 2019 showed a total vacancy rate in this area of 10.14%.

Our organizations urge you to include the bipartisan BIO Preparedness Workforce Act in the PREVENT Pandemics Act and we look forward to collaborating with you on this vital issue.

Thank you for your leadership on this critically important issue.

Sincerely,

African American Health Alliance  
AIDS Foundation Chicago  
American Academy of HIV Medicine  
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American Dental Association  
American Medical Association  
American Pharmacy Cooperative, Inc.  
American Society for Microbiology  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
CAEAR Coalition  
California Medical Association  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
HealthHIV  
HIV Dental Alliance  
HIV Medicine Association  
Hope House of St. Croix Valley  
Infectious Diseases Association of California  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
Infectious Diseases Society of Ohio  
John Snow, Inc. (JSI)  
Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security  
Johns Hopkins School of Nursing  
Johns Hopkins University  
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine  
Massachusetts Infectious Diseases Society  
Massachusetts Medical Society  
NASTAD  
National Coalition for LGBTQ Health  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Medical Association  
National Rural Health Association  
National Working Positive Coalition  
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society  
Peggy Lillis Foundation  
Physician Assistant Education Association  
Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition  
Sepsis Alliance  
SisterLove, Inc.  
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists  
The AIDS Institute  
Tufts Medical Center  
VAC | Westbrook Clinics  
Valley AIDS Council  
Washington University in St. Louis  
Wisconsin Hospital Association  
Yale School of Medicine, Section of Infectious Disease