

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 7, 2014

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman
Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Subcommittee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kingston,

We write to urge you to convene our subcommittee as soon as possible this month for a hearing on the emergent public health threats posed by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which has shown up both in the US and Spain, and the recent domestic outbreak of Enterovirus D68. As you know, the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations subcommittee holds jurisdiction over funding for two of the primary federal public health agencies standing at the forefront of this crisis – the CDC and the NIH, in addition to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA).

Since Congress left Washington last month—the earliest we have recessed in over 50 years—the Ebola virus has found its way onto American soil and Enterovirus D68 has reached almost every state and is linked to the deaths of multiple children. The House Appropriations Committee has not heard publicly from the CDC or the NIH since March, and we need to independently assess their response to these critical public health crises.

As you know, our subcommittee has been forced to make difficult choices due to our constrained budget environment over the past four years. That has resulted in the purchasing power of the NIH being reduced by 10 percent over the last four years. Our public health infrastructure at the CDC and HHS has also been forced to make do with less. CDC's program that supports our state and local public health professionals who are working on the front lines to contain this current Ebola epidemic has been cut by 16 percent over the last four years after adjusting for inflation. The program at HHS that helps hospitals be ready to contain deadly epidemics like Ebola and prepare for patient surges from outbreaks like Enterovirus D68 has been reduced by 44 percent over the same period after adjusting for inflation.

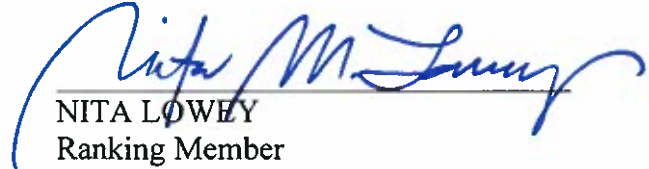
While we may disagree on the merits and the necessity of these cuts, we have a responsibility to ensure that CDC, NIH and the other public health agencies under our jurisdiction have sufficient resources to protect the public health and are taking the appropriate actions today to address it. When Congress returns from the November elections, we will have to determine the funding necessary for these agencies to respond to these public health crises before the Continuing Resolution expires. Therefore, we urge you to convene a Subcommittee

hearing this month to gather the information we need to make informed decisions for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Sincerely,



ROSA L. DeLAURO
Ranking Member
Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations
Subcommittee



NITA LOWEY
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee



LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress



BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



MIKE HONDA
Member of Congress

cc: Chairman Harold Rogers