



July 28, 2008



Senator Edward Kennedy
United States Senate
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



RE: S. 2313, the “Strategies to Address Antimicrobial Resistance Act”

Dear Senator Kennedy:



The undersigned organizations represent physicians, hospitals, pharmacists, healthcare epidemiologists, infection prevention and control professionals, and public health experts and advocates. We write today to request that you cosponsor S. 2313, the “Strategies to Address Antimicrobial Resistance (STAAR) Act,” bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT). The bill has been cosponsored by Senators John Warner (R-VA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Charles Schumer (D-NY).



Antimicrobial resistance is a serious patient safety and public health issue. Although initially affecting ill people in hospitals, drug-resistant bacteria, such as multi-drug-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), are infecting an increasing number of people in community-settings, outside hospitals, including healthy athletes and children. The resulting infections affect hundreds of thousands of Americans and cause tens of thousands of deaths each year. The infections are painful, difficult to treat, and cost many billions of dollars to the U.S. health care system annually.



“The last decade has seen the inexorable proliferation of a host of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, or bad bugs, not just MRSA but other insidious players as well. ...For these bacteria, the pipeline of new antibiotics is verging on empty. ‘What do you do when you’re faced with an infection, with a very sick patient, and you get a lab report back and every single drug is listed as resistant?’ asks Dr. Fred Tenover of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). ‘This is a major blooming public health crisis.’” — July 18, 2008 Science magazine.



A CDC-supported study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (October 17, 2007) estimated that MRSA infects more than 94,000 people and kills nearly 19,000 annually around the country— more deaths than those caused by emphysema, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson’s disease and homicide. Infectious diseases and other physicians are concerned about MRSA infections, but they also are deeply concerned about resistant *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), *Acinetobacter baumannii* (afflicting soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan), resistant *Klebsiella species* (spreading across the East Coast and into the Midwest), extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB), *Clostridium difficile*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Enterococcus faecium*—new national surveillance data from CDC demonstrate that an incredible 80 percent of *E. faecium* associated with device-related healthcare-associated infections were resistant to vancomycin.



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Physicians and other healthcare professionals are increasingly frustrated by the hurdles they face in caring for patients with life-threatening drug-resistant infections, and they are distraught about the toll it takes on their patients' lives and those of their families and friends. It is simply unacceptable to see children and adults die when society has the resources and the tools—but not the will—to reduce the impact of these diseases. We cannot stop the development of antibacterial resistance—bacteria will continue to mutate in response to antibacterial drug use. However, we can respond with new and effective strategies and interventions.

Outside of strengthening our diminishing antibacterial pipeline, what we need most are improved U.S. coordination and specific actions designed to better monitor, treat, and most importantly prevent the development and transmission of drug resistant microbes that threaten the health of all Americans and increase the cost of healthcare delivery. The STAAR Act provides the appropriate, balanced set of measures to achieve these goals.

As medical, healthcare, and public health organizations dedicated to patient care and safety, as well as public health in general, we urge you to co-sponsor the STAAR Act as well as to support its prompt passage. Should you have any questions, please contact Robert J. Guidos, JD, director of public policy and government relations for the Infectious Diseases Society of America, at 703-299-0202 or rguidos@idsociety.org.

Sincerely, the:

Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American Medical Association
American Public Health Association
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Infectious Diseases Society of America
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
Premier, Inc.
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists