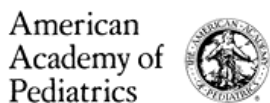




March 18, 2008

Senator Edward Kennedy
United States Senate
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Faxed to: (202) 224-2417



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 communicate our endorsement of S. 2313, the "Strategies to Address Antimicrobial Resistance (STAAR) Act," bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) on November 6, 2007. The legislation currently has five co-sponsors.



Antimicrobial resistance is a serious patient safety and public health issue. Although primarily affecting ill people in hospitals, a growing number of the victims of drug-resistant microbes, such as multi-drug-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), are people in the community and 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. These "bad bugs" have become a silent epidemic in communities and hospitals across the United States.



The infections about which Infectious Diseases and other physicians are most concerned include MRSA, resistant *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), *Acinetobacter baumannii* (which is threatening soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan), resistant *Klebsiella species* (which appear to have originated in or near Brooklyn and now are spreading across the East Coast and into the Midwest), extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB), *Clostridium difficile*, and resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.



A recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association (October 17, 2007) demonstrates that more than 94,000 people are infected and nearly 19,000 die annually from MRSA alone around the country – more deaths than those caused by emphysema, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson's disease and homicide.



It is frustrating to see patients with life-threatening infections and the toll it takes on their lives and on their families and friends, or to see children and adults die when we have the resources and the tools to reduce the impact of these diseases. We cannot stop the development of antibiotic resistance – bacteria will continue to mutate in response to antibiotics. However, we can slow the pace of the rise in antibiotic resistance, if we have the will to act.



The STAAR Act will greatly enhance the U.S. ability to respond to the antimicrobial resistance problem. The bill provides comprehensive strategies to strengthen federal antimicrobial resistance surveillance, prevention and control, and research efforts. Most importantly, the legislation authorizes new funding and strengthens coordination within the Department of Health and Human Services' agencies as well as across multiple federal departments – the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Defense as well as the Environmental Protection Agency all have critical roles to play. The STAAR Act also provides new opportunities to address the global antimicrobial resistance problem. The STAAR Act provides a rare opportunity to bring multiple partners together to protect patients and the public's health from antimicrobial-resistant infections.

The STAAR Act includes a comprehensive set of specific actions to avoid a brewing crisis that is taking and/or debilitating the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans annually.

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
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists