

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 17, 2023

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Carole Johnson
Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration
5500 Fishers Lane
Rockville, M.D. 20857

Dear Secretary Becerra and Administrator Johnson:

The *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023* authorizes a new Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program (Division FF, Chapter 3 – Sec. 2221(h)) as a part of the *PREVENT Pandemics Act*. I write to urge you to include \$50 million in the President’s Budget Request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 to launch this new pilot program, which is based on the bipartisan *Bolstering Infectious Outbreaks (BIO) Preparedness Workforce Act*, which I introduced in the 117th Congress. The legislation and pilot program aim to incentivize more health care professionals to enter the field of infectious diseases (ID) and work in underserved areas.

As you may know, nearly 80% of U.S. counties nationwide do not have a single ID physician. Other ID health care professionals, including nurses, pharmacists, physician assistants, infection preventionists and clinical microbiologists, face similar shortages. Even in the Boston area, which is home to some of the greatest health care institutions in the world, serious staffing shortages are leaving many of my constituents and those in surrounding districts and states without access to care for serious infections and leaving our communities without the clinical expertise needed for pandemic and outbreak preparedness. In Lowell, as in so many communities facing epidemics of injection drug use, infections associated with substance use are a serious concern.

The Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program is intended to encourage early career health care professionals to enter the field of ID and support the expansion of access to ID care, targeting where it is needed the most. In 2022, only 56% of adult ID training programs filled their positions, while most other medical specialties filled all or nearly all of their training programs. **An allocation of \$50 million in FY2024 would enable as many as 1,000 infectious diseases (ID) professionals to receive up to \$50,000 each in student loan repayment benefits.** Many of

President Biden's vital proposals to end the HIV epidemic, improve pandemic preparedness, eliminate viral hepatitis, control sexually transmitted infections, and combat antimicrobial resistance will be strengthened by increasing the number of ID clinicians in underserved areas.

Section 2221, as enacted, authorizes \$100 million for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2025 for the Public Health Loan Repayment Program, including the new bio-preparedness workforce pilot program. A request of \$50 million in the President's FY2024 Budget will help secure the resources necessary for the pilot to more equitably distribute and increase the size of the ID workforce in the upcoming appropriations cycle.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lori Trahan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lori" being more prominent and larger than the last name "Trahan".

Lori Trahan
Member of Congress