

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 11, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
Dirksen, Room 135
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
Dirksen, Room 156
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Blunt, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Murray:

As the committee begins consideration of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor HHS) appropriations bill, we write to request you fund sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at no less than \$227.3 million to allow states and cities to respond to the highest STD levels ever reported.

The United States leads all industrialized nations in the incidence of STDs. Twenty million new cases of STDs occur each year, which cost our health care system \$16 billion dollars annually. Stopping the spread of STDs requires early diagnosis and prompt treatment. STDs have serious life-long health consequences, including infertility, higher cancer risk, disability or death. These dire health consequences disproportionately impact women and newborn babies.

CDC reports that STDs are at a record high. In the last year, syphilis and gonorrhea rates both increased by 20 percent. Syphilis has increased among women at an even higher rate, which has resulted in a 30 percent increase in congenital syphilis—syphilis transmitted during pregnancy. Congenital syphilis is entirely preventable, and a single baby born with congenital syphilis is one too many. In the last year in America, over 620 babies were born with congenital syphilis. Babies born with congenital syphilis are at risk for devastating life-long consequences and death.

In addition, CDC studies have shown that STD infection rates have increased along with heroin injections and prescription opioid misuse disorders. STDs have increased directly as a result of the increasing drug use; states across the country report drug use in 30-80% of their STD cases.

In the last 15 years, STD prevention funding at the CDC has seen a \$21 million reduction. This is a reduction of 40 percent in buying power for CDC and its state, local and territorial grantees. In light of this reduction, since 2003:

- Cases of syphilis have increased 230 percent
- Cases of chlamydia have increased 75 percent
- Only one drug is now recommended for gonorrhea treatment due to emergence of drug resistance; in 2003, CDC recommended five different drug treatments for gonorrhea.

The Division of STD Prevention at CDC partners with all 50 state health departments and seven large urban areas for STD prevention. This includes STD monitoring, outbreak response, assurance of appropriate screening and treatment by health care providers, contact tracing and access to health care for HIV, and providing STD prevention information to the general public. Funding for STD prevention is not only useful in fighting and quelling STD outbreaks, but is also helpful in our national fight against the opioid epidemic.


Addressing these epidemics requires a strong federal investment and commitment to ensure the health of all our communities. With a significant increase in funding, we can turn back the clock and stop these epidemics. With a significant increase in funding, we can eliminate transmission of syphilis from mother to child, just like we are eliminating mother to child transmission of HIV. We know how to combat the transmission of STDs, now all we need is the appropriate level of federal investments.

Failure to adequately fund STD prevention will only exacerbate the worsening STD epidemic in our country. In the FY19 Labor HHS Appropriations bill, we urge you to provide at least \$227.3 million for STD prevention programs at the CDC.

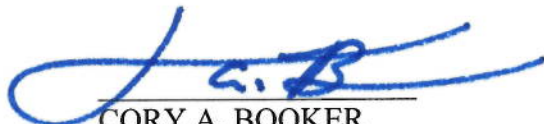
Sincerely,



JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator



TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator



CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senator



MARGARET WOOD HASSAN
United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
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United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow

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United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren

ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator