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December 22, 2004

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We respectfully request that you reconsider the use of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Immunization Program 317 funds for the purchase of imported flu vaccine. We are also asking you to reimburse the National Immunization Program's account for any funds that have already been spent on purchasing this flu vaccine. While we fully support your plans to import flu vaccine to make up for part of the shortfall caused by the closing of the Chiron facility in October, we are concerned that this purchase may be at the expense of the states' ability to purchase necessary pediatric vaccines.

The 317 program is an important public health initiative that allows states to ensure that children who do not qualify for the Vaccines for Children program can receive routinely recommended immunizations. Unfortunately, because of increased costs and decreased funding, this program is serving fewer children today than it did five years ago, and some states are not able to provide all of the routinely recommended vaccines to children eligible for this program. According to the testimony of Dr. Robert Stroube, Virginia's Commissioner of Health, Virginia, for example, does not have adequate 317 funding to immunize all the children who rely on the program against pneumococcal disease.¹ If this program has to bear the additional costs of purchasing flu vaccine, the program will serve even fewer children.

States may have some balances left in their 317 account, monies which must be used by the end of this calendar year. However, it is our understanding that states are purchasing pediatric vaccines with that funding, and little if any of those funds will be left unspent.

¹Committee on Government Reform, *Hearing: A Review of This Year's Flu Season*, 108th Cong. (Feb. 12, 2004).

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Promoting both childhood vaccination and flu immunization must be public health priorities, but one should not come at the expense of the other.

Sincerely,



Tom Davis
Chairman



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member