



American Public Health Association

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July 27, 2005

The Honorable Henry Waxman
United States House of Representatives
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Waxman:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association (APHA), the oldest, largest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world, dedicated to protecting all Americans and their communities from preventable, serious health threats and assuring community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities and preventive health services are universally accessible in the United States, I write in support of the Vaccine Access and Supply Act.

APHA has long supported measures to facilitate the increased access of children and adults, especially those that are uninsured and fall in high-risk categories, to vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), including the influenza vaccine. At a time of heightened risk of a flu pandemic, with financial and geographic barriers currently in place prohibiting low-income and uninsured adults from being vaccinated against influenza and other vaccine-preventable diseases, the Vaccine Access and Supply Act offers an innovative, evidence-based approach to ensure that Americans are protected against such diseases. The legislation takes important steps to protect the public, including educating the public about the importance of being vaccinated, particularly among high-risk groups.

Considering that many uninsured individuals also fall into high-risk groups that are more likely to experience complications associated with influenza and other vaccine-preventable diseases, the bill's establishment of a Vaccines for Adults (VFA) program and allocation of additional 317 funds directed at providing immunizations to adults will begin to address their concerns. These provisions, when coupled with the prohibition on Medicaid cost-sharing for ACIP-recommended vaccines for adults, will assure that financial barriers to adults getting immunized against a wide range of vaccine-preventable diseases are removed. The bill would also expand the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program to cover vaccines administered in public clinics to underinsured children whose health insurance does not cover immunizations, who otherwise can only receive free vaccines in a federally qualified health center or a rural health center. The creation of the VFA program and the strengthening of the VFC program, along with related vaccine education and promotion efforts, will ultimately positively affect the health status of the population and contribute to herd immunity.

In an era during which new and re-emerging diseases are growing threats, taking into consideration the current avian influenza outbreak, the Vaccine Access and Supply Act is responsive to these concerns through its allocation of funds towards new vaccine production and its creation of a partnership between the Secretary of Health and Human Services and vaccine distributors and manufacturers to effectively locate vaccine supplies in the event of a pandemic or other public health emergency. Granting the Secretary the ability to determine the location and supply of vaccines in partnership with vaccine manufacturers and distributors will help ensure that the distribution of vaccine will more accurately match local demand, so that communities with disproportionate shares of high-risk individuals will not experience vaccine shortages.

Thank you for your attention to and leadership on this important public health issue. We look forward to working with you to move this legislation forward this year. If you have questions, or for additional information, please contact Courtney Perlino at (202) 777-2436 or courtney.perlino@apha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP
Executive Director