

EDWARD J. MARKEY
MASSACHUSETTS

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INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AND
PEACE CORPS

U.S. SENATE CLIMATE CHANGE CLEARING HOUSE

United States Senate

October 9, 2014

SUITE SR-218
RUSSELL BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2107
202-224-2742

975 JFK FEDERAL BUILDING
15 NEW SUDBURY STREET
BOSTON, MA 02203
617-565-8519

222 MILLIKEN BOULEVARD, SUITE 312
FALL RIVER, MA 02721
508-677-0523

1550 MAIN STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01101
413-785-4610

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In light of the ongoing Ebola crisis in West Africa, and its effects on the public health and national security of the United States, I respectfully urge you to ensure that every appropriate federal agency has the funding necessary to continue a coordinated and robust response to this and any other health emergency in your Fiscal Year 2016 budget request.

As Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Development and Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs, International Environmental Protection, and Peace Corps, I am mindful of the potential threats to both public health and national security posed by infectious diseases and the importance of an immediate, coordinated, comprehensive and sustained response to combat those threats. It is imperative that the involved federal agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Department of Defense and State Department, have adequate funding and resources to support their current efforts and additional efforts that may be necessary in the future.

Given the vulnerabilities that the Ebola crisis has exposed in our domestic and global public health preparedness, it is also imperative that state and local governments have the resources in place to respond to infectious disease outbreaks in the future, such as influenza viruses with pandemic potential and bioterrorism agents. Both the current Ebola crisis and the recent enterovirus D68 outbreak have highlighted the importance of strong public health systems to detect, diagnose and respond to infectious disease threats. A 2013 report released by Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that our nation's ability to prevent and control infectious disease outbreaks is hampered by outdated systems and limited resources, and the majority of states scored 50% or lower on 10 key indicators of policies and capabilities to protect against infectious disease threats.¹ The fundamental capacity of our state and local public health response has been diminished over the past decade because of budget cuts and the economic downturn resulting in a loss of nearly 44,000 jobs in the local health department workforce between 2008 and 2012. I respectfully urge you to provide increased funding to programs supporting hospital and public health emergency preparedness, such as the CDC's Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness

¹ Trust for America's Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2013). *Outbreaks: Protecting Americans from Infectious Diseases*. Retrieved from <http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/TFAH2013OutbreaksRpt14.pdf>.

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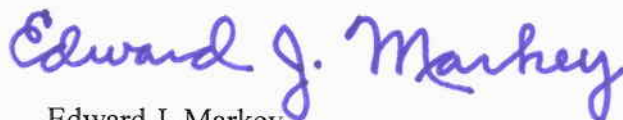
(PHEP) cooperative agreement program administered by the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, in your Fiscal Year 2016 budget request. Providing ample funding for these and other important programs would help ensure that state and local public health systems are prepared to respond to infectious disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies.

The Ebola crisis has also underscored the continued need for robust NIH funding to support research to study the causes of infectious disease and develop improved means of preventing, diagnosing and treating those illnesses. An international team led by Dr. Pardis Sabeti, an Associate Professor at Harvard University and Senior Associate Member of the Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT, used genomic sequencing technologies to identify the origin and track transmission of the Ebola virus in the current outbreak in West Africa.² This important work was funded in part by NIH's Common Fund and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). NIH is also playing a key role in investigating potential Ebola medications and vaccines, and it recently began initial human testing of an investigational vaccine.

Ensuring that the United States continues to mount a robust, coordinated and comprehensive response to the Ebola crisis and that the involved multiple federal agencies have adequate, sustained and predictable funding to support their efforts is essential to containing this epidemic and reducing the health risks to American citizens. Strengthening our nation's public health and preparedness systems and healthcare infrastructure as well as investing in biomedical research through strong, sustained NIH funding are critical steps to improve our ability to respond to emerging infectious disease threats in the future and protect the health of all Americans.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey

² Genomic surveillance elucidates Ebola virus origin and transmission during the 2014 outbreak. Gire SK *et al.* *Science*. 2014 Sep 12;345(6202):1369-72. doi: 10.1126/science.1259657. Epub 2014 Aug 28.