



Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

August 5, 2020

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer and Representatives Pelosi and McCarthy,

As organizations representing health care providers, scientists, public health, patients, industry and advocates, we write to thank you for your leadership in developing the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act and to emphasize the importance of addressing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as a component of the COVID-19 response.

While the exact impacts of AMR on the COVID-19 pandemic are not yet fully understood, evidence has emerged of secondary infections among COVID-19 patients. Roughly 1 in 5 patients appear to suffer secondary bacterial and fungal infections, a risk that rises for patients in ICUs and those on mechanical ventilation; the longer patients remain on ventilation, the higher their risk for acquiring a secondary infection.¹ An earlier report on 191 patients found that ventilator-associated bacterial pneumonia occurred in 31 percent of the patients requiring invasive mechanical ventilation.²

We are deeply concerned that our antibiotic research and development (R&D) capacity was already insufficient to meet patient needs before COVID-19. In 2019, two small antibiotic companies with new antibiotics on the market filed for bankruptcy. On March 16 of this year, the small antibiotic company Tetrphase was acquired by another pharmaceutical company for only

¹ Gupta S, Hayek SS, Wang W, et al. Factors Associated with Death in Critically Ill Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 in the US. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. July 2020. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.3596.

² Zhou F, Yu T, Du R, Fan G, Liu Y, Liu Z. Clinical course and risk factors for mortality of adult inpatients with COVID-19 in Wuhan, China: a retrospective cohort study. *The Lancet*. 2020;395(10229):1054-1062. doi:10.1016/s0140-6736(20)30566-3.

\$14 million, despite having a valuable new antibiotic on the market. This extremely low valuing of antibiotics has caused nearly all large pharmaceutical companies and the venture capitalists that sustain smaller companies to exit antibiotic R&D. Funding to provide some return on investment for novel antibiotics, like through the post-approval support that BARDA's Project BioShield provided to Paratek in December 2019, is an essential piece of the solution to prevent the collapse of new antibiotic development at this critical time.

We appreciate inclusion of the DISARM Act, which would take antibiotics for serious and life-threatening infections out of the DRG and pay for them separately in addition to requiring additional stewardship measures and surveillance reporting, in previous COVID-19 legislation packages. We also appreciate the inclusion of \$500 million for BARDA to support U.S.-based next-generation manufacturing facilities in the House of Representatives' Health Heroes Act. We further urge that any funding be directed to post-approval support and available for all AMR threats, not just traditional biothreats.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to addressing AMR. Either of these proposed solutions are crucial to improving antibiotic R&D capacity in the U.S. but are only two of many methods to solving this global epidemic. We urge you to include one or both of these solutions in the final COVID-19 legislation package.

Thank you for your continued attention to antimicrobial resistance throughout the COVID-19 response. We hope that expanding antibiotic resistance R&D, stewardship and surveillance activities during this critical time will help detect, prevent and treat potentially resistant secondary infections in COVID-19 patients.

Sincerely,

American Society for Microbiology
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Infectious Diseases Society of America
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Trust for America's Health