

November, 2020

Senator John Hoeven
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Stanford Bishop Jr
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hoeven, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Merkley, and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

The novel coronavirus pandemic has taken more than 250,000 American lives and has cost trillions of dollars to keep our nation's economy afloat. While health professionals continue the fight to save people from COVID-19, we strongly urge you to act to help prevent the next pandemic.

Medical experts agree that a future pandemic is a matter of *when*, not *if*. Leading epidemiologist Dr. Michael Osterholm [warned in 2017](#) that the next pandemic could very well be an antibiotic-resistant superbug. The United States' overuse of antibiotics in livestock adds to that risk.

As you work to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations, we urge you to include funding for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to establish defined durations for all medically important antibiotics used in food-producing animals. Currently, about one-third of medically important antibiotics do not carry these duration limits in livestock, and can be used for an animal's entire lifespan.

In its recent appropriations bill, the U.S. House of Representatives included both language and resources for the FDA to accomplish these important goals. To thwart the growth and proliferation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, preserve the foundations of modern medicine, and prevent another public health catastrophe, the Senate should follow suit immediately. We cannot stress enough the importance of the Senate Appropriations Committee helping the FDA carry out one of its top priorities in addressing antibiotic resistance -- establishing time limits on how long animal farmers can feed medically important drugs to poultry flocks and herds of livestock.

In 2017, the FDA implemented regulations that prohibit the use of antibiotics solely to [make animals grow fatter, faster](#). That's good, but the agency continues to allow meat producers to [routinely use medically important antibiotics to prevent disease](#) in animals that are not sick, rather than implementing policies that will improve the animals' living conditions to keep them healthy naturally. This is not appropriate use of life-saving medicines and it makes them less effective when we truly need them.

Establishing a time limit for how long a producer can give animals medically important antibiotics would be a simple but important step toward a healthier United States.

As antibiotic resistance worsens, clinicians realize we are on the verge of many of these precious medications losing their effectiveness. If that happens, modern medicine will never be the same: simple surgeries could become deadly, organ transplants unviable and even childbirth would be more dangerous. That is why we are urging you, the Senate, to take this step to help the FDA carry out one of its priorities -- to ensure antibiotics are used more judiciously to keep America healthy.

Signed,

Matthew Wellington, Public Health Campaigns Director
U.S. PIRG

Steffanie Strathdee, PhD
Associate Dean, Global Health Sciences and Harold Simon Professor of Medicine, UC San Diego

Scott Weissman, MD
Infectious Disease Specialist, Seattle Children's Hospital

Talene Metjian, PharmD
Manager, Antimicrobial Stewardship Program, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Payal Patel, MD, MPH
Infectious Diseases Physician, University of Michigan

William Shafer, PhD
Professor, Emory University School of Medicine

Irana Hawkins, PhD, MPH, RDN
Faculty, Doctoral Programs in Public Health

Sujit Suchindran, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor of Medicine, Emory University

Ron Medzon, MD
Associate Professor, Emergency Medicine, Boston University School of Medicine

Sameer Patel, MD, MPH
Northwestern University

Eric McGrath, MD
Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Wayne State University School of Medicine

Rita Fahrner, RN, NP
University California San Francisco

Scott Nelson
Respiratory Therapist

William Wood, MD
Otolaryngologist

David Wallinga, MD

Lana Fishkin, MD

Pela Tomasello, L.Ac.