

May, 2019

The Honorable Eliot Engel
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Don Young
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Engel and Young:

Thank you for your leadership on combating tuberculosis (TB) in the U.S. The undersigned organizations wish to endorse legislation that you are sponsoring, the 2019 Comprehensive TB Elimination Act (CTEA). This important public health legislation will strengthen domestic TB efforts by reauthorizing our National Strategy for Combating and Eliminating Tuberculosis, authorizing increased funding to implement domestic elements of the National Action Plan to Combat Multi-drug Resistant Tuberculosis (NAP) and a TB prevention initiative, and enhancing TB research and development.

TB, an airborne infectious disease, is the leading global infectious killer, ahead of HIV/AIDS, killing 1.6 million people annually. The continued global pandemic, including the spread of drug resistant TB, presents a serious public health threat to the U.S. Every state continues to report cases of TB annually; TB outbreaks occur across the country in schools, workplaces, homeless shelters, and prisons, outstripping local public health departments' budgets and staff capacity. Despite successes in decreasing the number of TB cases in the U.S. in recent years, the rate at which cases are decreasing has plateaued, indicating that the limits of what can be accomplished towards TB elimination, with the current tools and resources, has been reached. In fact, certain areas have experienced significant increases in the number of TB cases reported.

In addition, there are an estimated 13 million individuals in the U.S. with latent TB infection (LTBI), many of these are unaware of their status and are not being diagnosed or offered treatment to prevent progression to disease. Unless those individuals at highest risk to progress to disease are identified and treated, we will not achieve elimination of this curable and preventable disease.

The expertise in identifying, treating and preventing TB remains within the U.S. public health system and TB programs must be strengthened to protect communities from this disease. If fully funded, the 2019 CTEA will strengthen domestic TB control through increased funding for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s domestic program, fund a national TB prevention initiative and ensure coordination between community health centers and state TB programs to identify and treat TB in high risk populations. The bill will enhance TB research and development at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and facilitate coordination of late stage research and development of new TB diagnostic, treatment and prevention tools with the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA). Finally, the bill will support implementation of the NAP, a roadmap for addressing MDR-TB in the U.S., globally and for accelerating research and development into new TB diagnostic, treatment and prevention tools.

Again, thank you for sponsoring this important public health legislation. We look forward to working with you closely to ensure its enactment into law.

Sincerely,

American Lung Association
American Medical Student Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
Global Health Technologies Coalition
Medical IMPACT
TB Alliance
Treatment Action Group
We are TB