

February 24, 2014

The Honorable Renee Ellmers
United States House of Representatives
426 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Ellmers:

As fellow North Carolinians and physicians and scientists who are engaged in the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases (ID), we thank you for supporting the passage of the Generating Antibiotic Incentives Now (GAIN) Act provisions as part of the FDA Safety and Innovation Act (FDASIA) during the 112th Congress. At the time that the GAIN provisions became law, congressional champions recognized it as a first step towards addressing the public health crisis posed by rising antibiotic resistance.

Significant work remains to protect the effectiveness of the new drugs brought to market from the development of resistance. To help protect patients and safeguard the government's investment in new antibiotics, we urge you cosponsor the Strategies to Address Antimicrobial Resistance (STAAR) Act, H.R. 2285, by Representative Matheson.

Last fall, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the report [Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States, 2013](#), which for the first time ranked and detailed the threats posed by antibiotic resistant bacteria. Conservative estimates reveal that more than two million Americans suffer antibiotic resistant infections each year, which result in approximately 23,000 deaths. The actual numbers are likely far higher, as our surveillance and data collection capabilities cannot yet capture the full disease burden. The infections cost tens of billions of dollars to the U.S. health care system annually, and the problem is worsening.

The CDC report states that 50% of all the antibiotics prescribed for people are not needed or are not optimally effective as prescribed, which hurts patients and spurs the development of resistance. As an example, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services cites the inappropriate use of antibiotics to treat predominantly viral upper respiratory tract infections and acute bronchitis as a primary driver of the alarmingly rapid rise in antibiotic-resistant *Streptococcus pneumoniae* in the state. Antibiotics, which are designed to kill bacteria, are ineffective in treating viral infections.

The CDC report recommends a four-pronged approach to address the crisis: (1.) implementing prevention strategies, (2.) increasing tracking of resistant bacteria, (3.) improving use of antibiotics, and (4.) promoting the development of new antibiotics and diagnostic tests.

The STAAR Act was developed with input from infectious diseases experts and leaders in public health, and provides a comprehensive approach to addressing rising resistance that is consistent with the recommendations offered by the CDC. The legislation would increase federal

coordination and leadership, as well as build upon existing federal programs and activities to enhance efforts to limit resistance and prevent the spread of antibiotic-resistant infections, improve surveillance and data collection, strengthen research, and promote antibiotic stewardship. One particular provision codifies in statute the new National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Clinical Trials Network on Antibiotic Resistance, which is co-led by [Duke University](#) and the University of California, San Francisco.

Given the impact of this crisis on North Carolina, and the nation as a whole, we urge you to join efforts in Congress to provide an appropriate and balanced federal response by cosponsoring the STAAR Act. The time to act is now, while we still have an opportunity to prevent a post-antibiotic era in which we are unable to successfully treat infections or carry out many other health care activities (e.g. transplants, chemotherapy, care of preterm infants and others) currently made safe and possible by effective antibiotics. Should you have any questions, please contact Jonathan Nurse, Director of Government Relations for the Infectious Diseases Society of America, at 703-299-0202 or jnurse@idsociety.org.

Sincerely,