

June 25, 2008

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chair
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey:

Last year many of the organizations listed below opposed language in the House FY08 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations bill that would have prohibited the use of federal funds “to administer to any child under 3 years of age an influenza vaccine during the 2008-2009 influenza season for which thimerosal is listed on the labeling as an ingredient.” That provision, if enacted, could have put thousands of children at risk of severe complications – even death – from influenza. We thank you for working successfully to ensure that the language was not in the final appropriations act.

We are writing again this year to urge you to oppose any efforts to insert this or other language that would restrict the use, or limit the availability, of recommended vaccines. During this most recent influenza season, 83 confirmed influenza-related pediatric deaths were reported, one as young as 29 days of age. Half of these children were less than 5 years old and most had not been vaccinated against influenza. Of the 72 (86%) pediatric deaths who had vaccination information available, only 10% had received influenza vaccine. Many other children were hospitalized as a result of influenza and its complications. Vaccinating children against life threatening diseases is a critical public health imperative.

Congress should not prohibit the use of federal funds to administer vaccines that save lives. We therefore urge the Appropriations Committee to do everything possible to ensure that all children are protected against vaccine preventable diseases, and that language restricting the availability or use of vaccines be kept out of the legislation before the Committee.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter and for your strong support of childhood immunization.

American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Medical Association
American Public Health Association
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of State and Territorial Public Health Social Workers

Campaign for Public Health
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Every Child By Two
Immunization Action Coalition
Immunization Coalition of Washington, DC
Infectious Diseases Society of America
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of STD Directors
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
Partnership for Prevention
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
Philadelphia Immunization Coalition
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Task Force for Child Survival and Development
Voices for Vaccines