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February 10, 2025

Dear Senator:

As the 119th Congress commences, the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) welcomes you. We encourage you and your staff to utilize our Society and our more than 13,000 members across the country as a resource for information regarding infectious diseases (ID) clinical care, research and public health. Our members are physicians, scientists, public health practitioners and other clinicians specializing in ID prevention, care, research and education. They care for adults and children with a wide variety of infectious diseases, including influenza; RSV; HIV; viral hepatitis; antimicrobial-resistant infections; and infections associated with the opioid epidemic, cancer care, organ transplants and other surgeries and complex care. We are happy to answer your questions and help support your responses to infectious diseases issues in your state.

As you consider nominees for leaders of our federal health agencies, please let us know if we can assist you with background information on infectious diseases issues or potential questions to pose to nominees. We are also pleased to offer [these suggested key qualifications](#) that we believe any nominee must embody, and [additional information](#) on issues raised during confirmation hearings for Robert F. Kennedy Jr., including the links between ID and chronic disease and the links between ID and national security.

IDSA believes that a well-funded public health and biomedical research infrastructure is part of the bedrock of our national security and well-being. Public health agencies are essential to provide clinicians and the public with the critical information necessary to make informed decisions to stay healthy and safe. Rapid, transparent and comprehensive information is critical to stay ahead of emerging, fast-moving threats, such as Ebola, Marburg and avian flu. ID research gives us the tools to prevent, detect and respond to dangerous infectious diseases, keeping individuals, communities and our economy secure.

Below please find a summary of our legislative priorities. We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you on these issues and other areas of common interest that impact patient care, biomedical research, public health and the preparedness and response to outbreaks. Please reach out to Lisa Cox, IDSA's director of government relations, at lcox@idsociety.org if you would like to connect or if we can assist you in any way.

Combating Antimicrobial Resistance

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is an increasing and severe threat to human health and national security. As our antimicrobial drugs grow less effective

due to overuse, we are eroding medical gains that rely upon antimicrobials, including cancer chemotherapy and other complex care and surgeries. Our military service people are at particular risk for resistant infections, as they may be stationed in parts of the world where certain hard-to-treat pathogens are endemic and where combat wounds and burns can easily become infected. AMR is also contributing significantly to health care costs, with just six of the worst pathogens adding more than \$4 billion to health care costs every year and half of that burden being borne by Medicare.

IDSA recommends that Congress:

- Enact a new way to finance urgently needed new antimicrobials that will unleash American innovation, manufacturing and availability of these lifesaving medicines
- Provide resources to enable rural and other resource-strapped hospitals to more fully implement antimicrobial stewardship interventions that have been proven to improve patient outcomes, reduce resistance and decrease health care costs
- Expand AMR prevention, surveillance and research

Improving Access to Cost-Effective Infectious Diseases Care in Rural and Other Underserved Communities

Health care costs associated with infectious diseases increased from an estimated \$4.1 billion in 2009 to \$6.6 billion in 2019. Without intervention, these costs will continue to grow. Increasingly complex medical care with growing numbers of immunosuppressed individuals, premature infants and elderly people means that even more patients will be at risk of serious infections. **Patients with serious infections who are cared for by ID physicians have shorter hospital stays, lower health care costs and significantly better outcomes.**

Unfortunately, nearly 80% of U.S. counties do not have a single ID physician. Shortages are particularly acute in rural communities, and we are not recruiting and training enough ID physicians to meet growing needs. Last year, only half of ID physician training programs filled their slots, whereas in most other specialties all or nearly all programs filled their slots.

ID is one of the lowest reimbursed medical specialties, despite providing care to some of the most medically complex patients, and high medical student debt is a key barrier to entering the field. **This is an example of our broken physician reimbursement system, which doesn't adequately value disease prevention, early intervention and cognitive (nonprocedural) care.** The ID physician shortage presents an opportunity for policies to reverse this trend.

IDSA recommends that Congress:

- Provide initial funding to launch the Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program (\$50 million), authorized in Public Law 117-328, to incentivize ID health professionals to work in rural and other shortage areas in exchange for targeted loan repayment
- Improve the Medicare physician reimbursement system to better recognize the value of nonprocedural care, including:
 - Fund the development of ID quality measures to pave the way for value-based models
 - Develop mechanisms to enable ID physicians to participate in the cost savings their work generates and to encourage more trainees to enter the field of ID

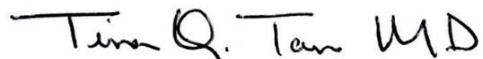
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- Provide resources to train and support the early-career pipeline of ID physician-researchers necessary to speed advancements in the cutting-edge research critical to controlling infectious diseases

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. We look forward to working with you to protect our nation's health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Q. Tan MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tina Tan, MD, FIDSA, FPIDS, FAAP
President
Infectious Diseases Society of America