

December 7, 2001

The Honorable Tom Harkin

U.S. Senate  
123 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter

U.S. Senate  
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine (ACP-ASIM), I want to congratulate you on the introduction of your legislation, S. 1747, to provide funding to protect Americans against the threat of bioterrorism. ACP-ASIM is the nation's largest medical specialty society, representing 115,000 physicians and medical students who specialize in internal medicine.

For years, the College has been deeply concerned about the threat of a biological or chemical attack to public health and how unprepared physicians, nurses, and medical and public health organizations are. Disaster planning to respond to the serious threat of a biological or chemical weapon attack is critical. Neither the physician community nor the public health infrastructure is adequately equipped to meet this challenge. The level of federal commitment to respond to this kind of threat must be one that will last for many years to come. We applaud your efforts to provide the much-needed funding to address these gaps in our nation's public health infrastructure.

S. 1747 makes an important down payment to respond to a biological attack by allotting nearly \$3.4 billion to strengthen the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to improve the training of health care professionals at the state and local levels, to enhance hospital preparedness, and to protect our nation's food supply. We believe that funding for these initiatives is essential in order to respond to a biological or chemical attack.

ACP-ASIM supports authorizing legislation proposed by Senators Kennedy and Frist to combat a bioterrorist or chemical attack. Now we call on the rest of Congress to adequately fund this proposal. We thank you and other members of the Senate for your outstanding leadership in keeping America safe from a bioterrorist attack, and thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

William J. Hall, MD, FACP  
President

CC: Senate Appropriations Committee