

November 8, 2001

The Honorable Robert Menendez
U.S. House of Representatives
2238 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Menendez:

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, the Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2001 (BioPAct). 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 the public health and how unprepared physicians, nurses, and the medical and public health organizations are. Disaster planning for responding to a biological or chemical weapon threat is a serious one that we believe neither the physician community nor the public health structure is adequately equipped to control. The level of federal commitment in order to respond to this kind of a threat must be one that will last for many years to come. We applaud your efforts to reach this goal.

BioPAct makes an important first-step investment to respond to a biological attack by focusing \$3.5 billion to strengthen our public health infrastructure. We believe that effective state and local public health infrastructures are essential to respond to a biological or chemical attack. Therefore, there must be sufficient funding to establish seamless linkages of communication among medical personnel, and sufficient funding for the education and training of health care professionals. Additionally, there must also be adequate supplies of vaccines and antibiotics available throughout the country in the event of an attack. ACP-ASIM appreciates your efforts to strengthen our nation's public health infrastructure.

BioPAct also makes a significant commitment to the protection of this nation's food and water supply. We believe that our nation's crops, livestock, and water supply remain susceptible to attack and must be protected. Adequate levels of funding should be appropriated to ensure a safer food and water supply through additional inspectors, enhanced surveillance systems, better prevention programs, faster outbreak response, enhanced education, and better coordinated and focused research and risk assessment activities. ACP-ASIM also appreciates your efforts in these areas.

While ACP-ASIM believes that a chemical threat is as likely as a biological attack – and Congress should adequately fund legislation that equally addresses both – we remain committed

to working with Congress to become an effective defensive force against an attack. We thank you and fellow members of the Task Force on Homeland Security for your leadership in keeping America safe from a bioterrorist attack, and thank you for seeking our input.

Sincerely,

William J. Hall, MD, FACP
President

COPY:

Honorable Bill Pascrell, Public Health Working Group Chair
Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard, Public Health Working Group Vice Chair
Honorable Sanford Bishop, Physical Infrastructure Working Group Chair
Honorable Ellen Tauscher, Physical Infrastructure Working Group Vice Chair
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