



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

September 16, 2008

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
2446 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lee Terry
1524 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Edolphus Towns
2232 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: National Integrated Public Health Surveillance Systems and Reportable Conditions Act

Dear Representatives Baldwin, Terry and Towns:

The National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO) congratulates you on your introduction of the National Integrated Public Health Surveillance Systems and Reportable Conditions Act. This bill recognizes the critical importance of strengthening and modernizing the capacities of the nation's systems for identifying and responding to disease outbreaks.

NACCHO represents the nation's 2850 local health departments, who work every day on the front lines to protect the health of their communities. Local health departments serve cities, counties, towns, and tribes. They are the primary and fundamental site for disease surveillance and control. They regularly identify and contain outbreaks of foodborne and waterborne diseases, as well as such infectious diseases as measles, mumps, tuberculosis, and meningitis. At the same time they have been challenged to address serious new public health threats, including those posed by West Nile Virus, community-acquired antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and the potential global spread of pandemic influenza or any other emerging infectious disease. The need is acute for faster and more efficient systems to help local health departments prevent threatened disease outbreaks or contain actual outbreaks, as well as for many more highly trained public health scientists to work within those systems.

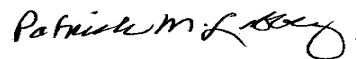
Local, state, and federal governments each have critical roles to play in disease surveillance, reporting, and response. They collaborate and rely on each other for the information and expertise that are necessary for a timely, effective response to any disease outbreak, whether it is local or national in scale. This measure will help to improve that collaborative system by



enhancing capacities for integrated surveillance, laboratory identification, and reporting of disease and by encouraging greater use of state-of-the-art information technology to improve the speed and efficiency that can save lives in a disease outbreak. We would hope that the implementation of this legislation will provide explicitly for local health department involvement in state planning for the use of these programs.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to public health. We look forward to working with you to improve the nation's public health system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick M. Libbey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Patrick M. Libbey
Executive Director