



March 7, 2016

Dear Senators/Representatives:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to prioritize funding for adult immunization-related activities at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Every year, more than 50,000 adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases, and thousands more suffer serious health problems that cause them to miss work and leave them unable to care for those who depend on them. Despite Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations, vaccines have been consistently underutilized in the adult population and lag far behind the Healthy People 2020 goals for the most commonly recommended vaccines (influenza, pneumococcal, Adult Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap), shingles, Human Papillomavirus (HPV)). These disparities are even greater when you consider at-risk populations – including seniors, communities of color, limited English proficient persons, and people with chronic illness.

The Adult Vaccine Access Coalition (AVAC) works to raise awareness, improve access, and increase utilization of vaccines among adults. AVAC consists of 45 organizational leaders that include health care providers, vaccine makers, pharmacies, public health organizations, patient and consumer groups working to strengthen and enhance access to and utilization of adult immunizations.

AVAC asks that you consider the benefits of protecting adults against vaccine-preventable disease, the challenges and barriers currently impeding adult immunization, and, the need to catalyze action to strengthen the vaccine infrastructure and delivery systems across the country during the FY17 appropriations process. Specifically, we urge you to prioritize the following immunization related programs as part of your FY17 appropriations request:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Section 317 [Immunization Program](#). We ask that Congress provide **\$650 million** for the national immunization program, also known as the 317 program, at the CDC. A robust immunization infrastructure is critical to support and protect the population against common preventable conditions as well as

potential disease outbreaks or public health emergencies. The Section 317 program acts as the backbone of our nation's public health infrastructure. This national, state and local network also provides a safety net to uninsured and poor adults, monitors the safety of vaccines, educates providers and performs community outreach, and conducts surveillance, laboratory testing, and epidemiology to respond to disease outbreaks. AVAC is particularly interested in 317 program investments in Immunization Information Systems (IIS) that improve data exchange security standards and enhance interfacing with electronic health records (EHRs). IIS' can help inform providers and support clinical decision-making in terms of a patient's immunization status as well as help determine recommended vaccines.

- [Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT](#). We ask that Congress support **\$82 million** in Public Health Service Evaluation Funds for the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC). Advancements in health IT (HIT) create opportunities for greater access to and utilization of immunizations among adults. Technology has the power to inform providers about recommended vaccines for the adult population. The ONC is engaged in pilot studies aimed at tackling technological and logistical barriers that will foster a provider's ability to receive and send a comprehensive record of a patient's immunization status to determine which vaccines are needed. ONC is also leading important work that will enable patients, family members and other caregivers to directly access immunization records through a web-based portal. These pilot studies hold great promise and should be expanded to test other innovative models that will help to improve the exchange of timely and complete immunization record information.
- [National Vaccine Program Office](#). We urge Congress to provide level funding of **\$6.4 million** for the National Vaccine Program Office (NVPO) at HHS. These dollars will help ensure robust implementation of the National Adult Immunization Plan (NAIP). This comprehensive plan lays out overarching goals along with a series of tangible objectives aimed at raising adult immunization rates in line with Healthy People 2020 targets. The NAIP also contains specific milestones intended to monitor progress on improving adult immunization.

The future for adult immunization is bright but adequate funding will be essential to achieving success in addressing the current barriers and challenges to improved access and higher coverage rates for this population. We appreciate your consideration of funding for adult immunizations at CDC, ONC, and NVPO. We look forward to working with your office as the FY17 appropriations process moves forward. For further information, please contact the AVAC managers at 202-540-1070 or info@adultvaccinesnow.org.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research
American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM)
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)
Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO)
GSK
Immunization Action Coalition
Infectious Diseases Society of America
March of Dimes
National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO)
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR)
Novavax
Pfizer
Sanofi Pasteur
Takeda
The Gerontological Society of America
Trust for America's Health