

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2011

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2362A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kingston and Ranking Member Farr:

Antibiotic resistance is a public health crisis in the United States. The scientific community – including prominent medical journals and government agencies – concur that routine usage of medically-important antibiotics in the animal agricultural industry is a significant contributor to this problem.

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2012 Agriculture, Rural Development, and Food and Drug Administration Appropriations bill, we respectfully request you consider three requests that will help research, monitor and find solutions to the problem of antibiotic resistance. The requests below are in priority order:

1. \$5 million in funds from the FDA's Transforming Food Safety Initiative to publish reviews on the safety of using approved medically-significant antimicrobials non-therapeutically in animal agriculture as it pertains to the selection and dissemination of antibiotic resistant food-borne pathogens.
2. \$3 million to fund Research and Education Grants for the Study of Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria as authorized in Section 7521 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, P.L. 110-246.
3. \$10 million for the FDA/USDA/CDC National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) in order to expand data collection by \$3 million beyond current annual funding of approximately \$7 million.

Funding for Safety Reviews of Antimicrobial Resistance

By appropriating funds to review the safety of medically-important antibiotics, we will receive a timely and objective risk analysis by a government agency of the health implications of current practices in animal agriculture. In addition to providing essential funds for post-market safety reviews of non-therapeutic antibiotic uses, we would like to recommend the following report language:

The FDA will conduct post-safety reviews of the contribution that all medically-important classes of antibiotics used for purposes other than treating disease in animal agriculture may have in the selection and dissemination of antibiotic resistant food-borne pathogens to the human population. In conducting these post-market safety reviews, the FDA shall use the same standards and methodology currently used in pre-market safety evaluations. The Committee directs the FDA to report the findings of the safety reviews to Congress within two years and to include a time line of any regulatory action steps needed to address drug uses found not to be safe. Congress directs the FDA immediately to report to Congress on any post-market safety reviews of animal antimicrobials already completed, but not yet made public.

The precedent for this request is clear. In the July 2007 report on the FY 08 appropriations bill, the House Committee on Appropriations expressed concern that the routine usage of antibiotics in animal agriculture was selecting and disseminating antibiotic-resistant pathogens.

Meanwhile, antibiotic resistance continues to be a major food safety concern. National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System data show that more than eighty percent of all meat and poultry products tested are contaminated with some form of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Funding for Research and Education Grants for the Study of Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria
Research to develop animal production systems less dependent on antibiotics will help American producers address antibiotic resistance, add consumer value to their products, and position themselves advantageously in the global marketplace.

In 2004, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report highlighting the trade implications for countries that do not improve their agricultural antibiotic-use practices. GAO found that two of our major competitors in world meat markets (New Zealand and Denmark) have already prohibited the use of medically important antibiotics for growth promotion in food animals, as has the European Union. In addition, Japan is now considering similar steps. To maintain market share, U.S. meat producers need to have the option to raise animals with less dependence on antibiotics. The 2008 Farm bill addressed this need by creating a new competitive grant program called Research and Education Grants for the Study of Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria (See Sec. 7521 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act, P.L. 110-246. 2008). Accordingly, we respectfully request that the committee appropriate \$3 million to support the grant program.

\$10 million for the FDA/USDA/CDC National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) program in order to expand it over its current annual level of approximately \$7 million.

NARMS is a national public health surveillance system that tracks changes in the susceptibility of certain enteric bacteria to antimicrobial agents of human medical importance. NARMS program resources are not commensurate with the growing problem of antibiotic resistant food-borne pathogens. NARMS has been funded at about \$7 million for the last several years. At that level, it has been unable to keep up with emerging new public health concerns, such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* ("MRSA"). Additional funds will enable increased surveillance, to include additional bacterial species and numbers and/or types of samples as well as allow NARMS researchers to utilize more sensitive methods (e.g., antibiotic-supplemented media and molecular assays).

These three requests provide a coordinated strategy to evaluate and monitor antimicrobial usage on food animals as well as to support the farm industry as it seeks to reduce antibiotic usage. We thank you for your careful consideration of these requests. Together, we can prevent the spread of antibiotic resistance while strengthening our farm sector.

Sincerely,



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress



Robert Andrews
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Gerald Connolly
Member of Congress



Barney Frank
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva
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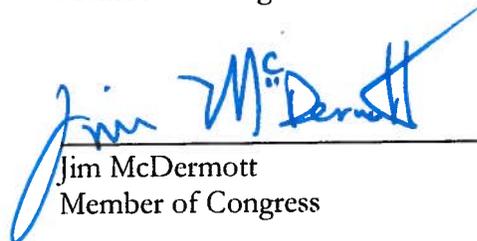
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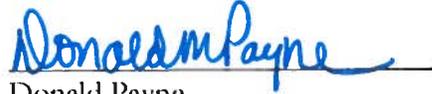
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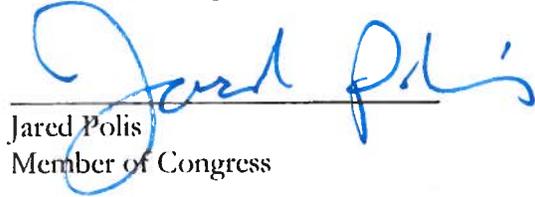
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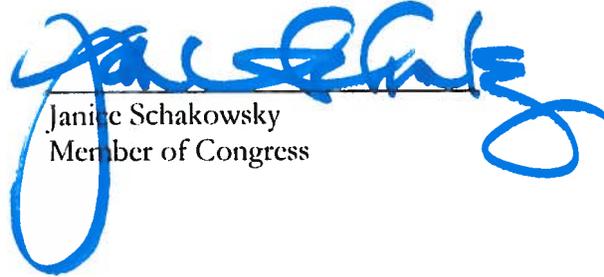
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