

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 11, 2015

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing in support of the Administration's recently announced initiative to develop a National Action Plan to Address Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (National Action Plan). This is a matter of great urgency both for the U.S. and the world. The National Action Plan is an essential component of the U.S. response to antibiotic resistant bacteria. As you work to develop and implement this National Action Plan, we request that you take swift, aggressive actions to address the threat of TB both at home and abroad.

Although we have seen a 45 percent global reduction in tuberculosis (TB) deaths since 1990, problems remain. TB is not a 19th-century threat or confined to developing countries. Daily, more than 4,000 global citizens continue to lose their lives to this disease. It is a large and escalating threat that requires constant surveillance and innovation. In an increasingly globalized world, drug-resistant TB poses a grave public health threat that is never more than a plane ride away.

Despite the fact that the majority of TB deaths occur across Africa and Southeast Asia, the United States is not immune to the rampages of this disease. In 2014 alone, there were more than 9,400 cases of TB in the U.S, and at least 18 states reported cases of TB in public schools. As more strains of TB become drug-resistant and as our world continues to globalize, we must prioritize a national strategy that will help eliminate the presence of TB both in the U.S. and across the world.

The development and implementation of a strong National Action Plan is an important first step in combatting this deadly disease. By pooling resources and expertise from multiple government agencies, the National Action Plan – as currently drafted – provides measurable objectives and sound interventions to end TB deaths domestically and globally.

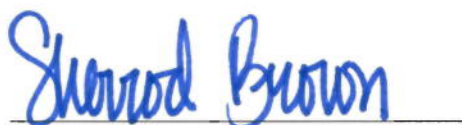
As you work to finalize the National Action Plan, we encourage you to work closely with stakeholders to craft a final product that is both bold and comprehensive, as well as to use all diplomatic means available to foster strong leadership to combat TB internationally.

The National Action Plan should have bold targets for scaling up services for addressing drug-resistant TB in the U.S. and abroad. It should have an aggressive research agenda, and it must include a strong means of independently assessing progress. Including tangible, specific actions for domestic and international preparedness, innovation, and response is critical. In addition, given the public health emergency of drug resistant TB, the National Action Plan should articulate any additional resources that are required to implement each element, beginning in fiscal year 2017.

While combating drug-resistant TB is an ambitious undertaking, addressing this global problem should remain a priority of this and future administrations. It is part of our nation's humanitarian imperative to protect our most vulnerable populations, both at home and abroad, from the devastating health, economic, societal implications of TB. We applaud the administration for taking the first steps toward a National Action Plan, and look forward to working with you on this priority moving forward.

Thank you again for your interest in combating TB. We look forward to hearing more about next steps.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



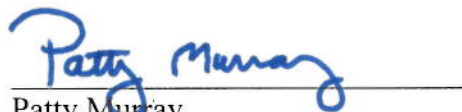
Barbara Mikulski
U.S. Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
U.S. Senator



Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senator



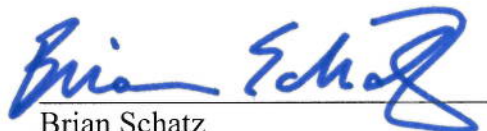
Patty Murray
U.S. Senator



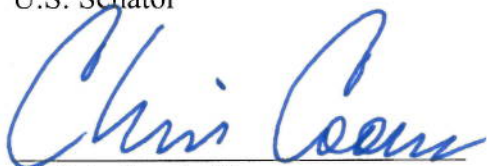
Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator



Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator



Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator



Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator

CC: Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
Alfonso E. Lenhardt, Acting Administrator, United States Agency for International Development
John Kerry, Secretary, Department of State
John P. Holdren, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology