

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you begin to develop the Fiscal Year 2019 (FY2019) Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, we respectfully ask you to prioritize funding for the Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In the United States, approximately 5.3 million people are affected by hepatitis with 50 to 65 percent unaware they are living with the infection.

Support this fiscal year will allow the CDC to stem the tide of increasing infections due to the current opioid epidemic and continue making progress in fighting viral hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV) transmission and disease on a number of fronts.

We have seen firsthand the detrimental impact opioid abuse is having on our communities. As a result of increased injection drug abuse, surveillance data released by the CDC has exposed a new wave of HCV infections among people who inject drugs. New HCV infections have increased nationally, with 30 states reporting increases of more than 200 percent. Nationwide, 30,500 new hepatitis C cases occurred in 2014, compared to 16,500 in 2011.

The nation witnessed the connection between HCV and injection drug use following an HIV outbreak in Scott County, Indiana. Of the 185 individuals initially diagnosed with HIV, 90 percent were also infected with HCV. Since the outbreak occurred in early 2015, that number has climbed to a total of 230. The crisis in Indiana serves as just one example of U.S. cities, both large and small, who are in need of more resources to stop the spread of preventable infections.

We appreciate the Committee's support for viral hepatitis prevention in FY2018 and strongly encourage you to strengthen the U.S.'s commitment in addressing this public health issue in FY2019.

Sincerely,



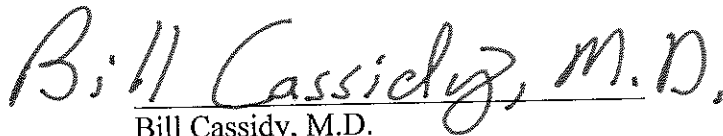
---

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



---

Todd Young  
United States Senator



---

Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator



---

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator