

January 21, 2021

The Honorable Gerry Connolly
2238 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Chabot
2408 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Connolly and Representative Chabot:

On behalf of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), one of the largest life science societies composed of more than 30,000 scientists and health professionals, I write to express our support for the "Global Health Security Act of 2021." We support the goal of this legislation, which authorizes a comprehensive, strategic approach to U.S. foreign assistance to strengthen global health security in developing countries. As the bill moves forward, we encourage further consideration of genomic surveillance and clinical aspects involved in addressing global outbreaks, including laboratory diagnostics and coordination of testing and medical countermeasures development.

A strong global health security (GHS) agenda is critical for international engagement and capacity building in public health. As an organization with an extensive global health program and scientists and public health workers on the front lines in countries all over the world, ASM understands firsthand the importance of securing our borders against both natural and intentional biological threats. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that our world is more interconnected than ever. What happens in environments in remote areas of the world can quickly become international public health emergencies because microbes are unimpeded by the construct of human borders.

In addition to supporting the bill's establishment of a Global Health Security Agenda Interagency Review Council, we are pleased that the bill would establish a permanent position, Special Advisor to the President for Global Health Security, to serve as the coordinator of global health responses at all times. As we have seen over the past year, a point person to manage interagency communications is critical to avoiding confusion and miscommunication when a public health emergency occurs.

We need to look no further than the COVID-19 pandemic to realize the responsibility we have to collaborate with nations around the globe when outbreaks arise. It is time for the United States to recommit to a strong, global health security agenda.

ASM appreciates your work on this legislation and if we can be of further assistance, please contact me at asegal@asmusa.org or 202-942-9294.

Sincerely,



Allen D. Segal
ASM Director of Public Policy and Advocacy

