



March 17, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room H-317
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Subcommittee on LHHS
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on LHHS
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM), one of the largest life science societies, is committed to working with Congress and the Administration to address the pressing needs associated with the novel coronavirus and COVID-19. Many of our members, including those in clinical laboratories, are on the front lines of helping our nation address the unprecedented challenges SARS-COV-2 has presented to our society, our healthcare system, and our economy.

On behalf of ASM's 30,000 members, we are writing to request that, as soon as the immediate public health emergency subsides, Congress and the Administration initiate a high-level, comprehensive review of the SARS-COV-2 response through either a federal commission or a qualified, nonpartisan entity such as the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. This process should also be forward-looking and make cross-cutting recommendations on how the United States can better prepare for future public health emergencies, including funding needs and policy changes. By fully understanding what went well and what did not during this most recent pandemic, we can help thwart, or at the very least minimize, the effects of the next pandemic.

Specifically, such a review should recommend the most effective ways to:

- Ensure global collaboration and open lines of communication with our international partners;
- Rapidly scale up laboratory testing capacity in order to get tests to those who need them;
- Ensure a steady supply chain of materials to labs and hospitals to mitigate shortages;
- Clearly and effectively communicate practical, science-based information and guidance to stakeholder entities and to the public; and
- Reduce patient access barriers so that all who need testing can get testing.,

The current crisis has brought to light a number of barriers, challenges and shortcomings in our ability to handle a public health emergency. Some of these were the results of "real-time" decision-making, while

others exposed systemic breakdowns that were years – if not decades – in the making. These cut across multiple agencies and span levels of government from federal, to state, to local authorities.

While ASM members in clinical laboratories have the most immediate connection to the current crisis, our members work in several areas that will be critical to a long-term strategy to head off future pandemics. These include those conducting basic biomedical research, those engaged in vaccine development, corporate partners responsible for service delivery as well as laboratory professions.

ASM stands ready to work with you to help improve the systems we have in place today and to develop the solutions that will help address tomorrow's challenges. If you have any questions, you may contact Allen Segal, ASM Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, at asegal@asmusa.org or 202-942-9294.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stefano Bertuzzi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stefano Bertuzzi, PhD, MPH
ASM Chief Executive Officer