March 23, 2015

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr,

Antibiotic resistance is the greatest public health threat of our time. Currently resistant bacteria infect over 2 million and kill at least 23,000 Americans every year, accounting for direct health-care costs of $20-35 billion. Globally, 700,000 die and the cost could be as high as $1.2 trillion. If we do not act now, by 2050 antibiotic resistant infections will be the leading cause of death – surpassing cancer – and could cost the world $100 trillion. Although antibiotics literally transformed the practice of modern medicine, we have been poor stewards of their effectiveness and we risk losing the greatest medical advance of the 20th century.

This problem has been noted with increasing alarm by the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST), among others. Funding to combat antibiotic resistance is desperately needed. The President's FY2016 budget request called for a $1.2 billion dollar investment in combating resistance. Over half of the request, $650 million, is earmarked for discovery of new antibiotics.

However, while new antibiotics are needed to fill the void created by the rising tide of resistance, we must remember that it was not an inability to discover antibiotics, but rather a failure to use them judiciously that has created rampant resistance and led to the current crisis. As you consider Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 appropriations we respectfully request that the need to preserve the effectiveness of the antibiotics we have now be given due consideration.

Although all uses of antibiotics contribute to resistance, animal agriculture is by far the largest user, consuming 80% of all antimicrobials and 70% of medically important antibiotics sold in the U.S. The majority of these are routinely given to healthy animals for "growth promotion" or "disease prevention." These uses have been successfully phased out in other countries without impacting livestock production. Along with reduced antibiotics consumption, levels of resistant organisms in foods and agricultural settings also decreased. The U.S. can follow these examples.

Addressing the overuse of antibiotics in food-animal production must be part of any solution to antibiotic resistance. Unfortunately only 10% of the President's 2016 Budget Proposal would go towards stewardship, surveillance and research on antibiotic alternatives in agriculture. This is a clear misalignment with the reality of how antibiotics are used in the United States.

As you consider Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 appropriations we respectfully request that the need to reduce consumption of antibiotics in agriculture be given increased consideration, including the following specific requests:

- At least $77 million in funding for the Department of Agriculture (USDA) for enhanced and expanded antibiotics research and surveillance efforts within the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), and National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) focused on minimizing the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria and their transmission through the food chain to support the government wide effort to combat antibiotic resistance.
- At least $47 million in funding for the FDA for initiatives directed towards Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria.
- $15 million for the FDA/USDA/CDC National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) in order to expand data collection and surveillance measures of antibiotic resistant bacteria on retail meat.
- $7.1 million funding increase for the FDA Animal Drugs and Feeds Program to assess and measure the impact of Guidance for Industry (GFI) #213 and the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) in reducing the use of antibiotics over time as a part of the National Strategy for Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria.
- $1 million for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) National Veterinary Accreditation Program to develop a training module regarding judicious antibiotic use in food animals.

- Sufficient funds for the USDA to expand and enhance the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) and to initiate annual surveillance of beef, pork and poultry production.
- Language that directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services (HHS) to finalize the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) and identify approaches for collecting, analyzing, and distributing detailed data on antibiotic use in animal agriculture. This data would be used as a baseline from which to measure the effects of the implementation of the FDA Guidance for Industry #213 and the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD). We request the following language:

"The Committee directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to require agencies to (1) finalize the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) regulation by April 2015, (2) identify approaches for collecting and disseminating detailed data on antibiotic use in animal agriculture to establish a baseline of usage before the implementation of the VFD regulation, including the amounts of medically important antibiotics, grouped by antibiotic drug class or mechanism of action to be broken down by administration location (i.e. state, county, zip code) and also by target species, route of administration, and intended use; (3) select the approach that best allows scientific experts to analyze and interpret antibiotic resistance data; (4) seek any resources necessary to implement such approach; (5) use the data to assess the effectiveness of policies to curb antibiotic resistance, such as Guidance for Industry #213 and the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD); and (6) publish both animal and human use antibiotic sales while protecting confidential business information."

We greatly appreciate your leadership and consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

_____ _____

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

_____ _____

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

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Raúl M. Grijalva
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