



SHEA Contact:
 Lynne Batshon
 Director, Policy & Practice
 4040 Wilson Blvd.
 Arlington, VA 22203
 (703) 684-0761
 lbatshon@shea-online.org

APIC Contact:
 Lisa Tomlinson
 VP, Government Affairs and
 Practice Guidance
 1400 Crystal Drive, Ste. 900
 Arlington, VA 22202
 (202) 454-2606
 ltomlinson@apic.org

SIDP Contact:
 Tom Dilworth, PharmD
 Vice Chair, Policy and
 Government Affairs Cmte.
 121 W. State St.
 Geneva, IL 60134
 sidp@affinity-strategies.com

Testimony of the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA), the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) and the Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists (SIDP) to the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) on Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

March 23, 2020

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America ([SHEA](#)), the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology ([APIC](#)), and the Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists ([SIDP](#)) urge appropriators to prioritize investments in the following federal programs:

| LHHS Programs | Agency | FY21 Funding Request |
|---|---------------|-----------------------------|
| National Healthcare Safety Network | CDC | \$25 million |
| Antibiotic Resistance Solutions Initiative | CDC | \$200 million |
| Advanced Molecular Detection | CDC | \$57 million |
| Data Modernization | CDC | \$100 million |
| Patient Safety Research | AHRQ | \$100.4 million |
| Healthcare-Associated Infections | AHRQ | \$50.2 million |
| Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria | AHRQ | \$13.9 million |
| Investigator-initiated Research | AHRQ | \$73.8 million |

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|---|-------------|----------------------|
| Biomedical and Advanced Research and Development Authority | ASPR | \$230 million |
|---|-------------|----------------------|

Congress has not appropriated new funding for the above listed federal programs for at least 10 years. These programs are critical for preventing healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and the spread of antibiotic resistance (AR). New investments in these programs must be prioritized to improve the quality of care delivered to every American and to ensure advancements made possible by medical research and innovation can be sustained.

Although dedicated prevention and infection control efforts have helped reduce the number of infections and deaths caused by antibiotic resistance, the [2019 Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States](#) report, published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), concludes that we are now in a post-antibiotic era where some drugs no longer cure the infections they were designed to treat. In the United States, 2.8 million antibiotic-resistant infections occur each year resulting in 35,000 deaths. Suboptimal antibiotic use and prescribing practices have led to nearly 223,900 *C. difficile* infections, of which at least 12,800 people died in 2017.

We urge you to invest \$25 million in the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN). Although significant progress has been made in preventing some HAIs, about one in 31 hospitalized patients (3.2%) develops at least one HAI. NHSN collects data on antibiotic prescribing and the prevalence of HAIs. The NHSN is also continuing its efforts to implement the antibiotic use and resistance module in hospitals, which would help monitor the use of certain antibiotics and the appearance of multidrug-resistant organisms in facilities. This funding includes providing technical support to more 65,000

users representing about 22,000 healthcare facilities across the continuum of care. There have been no new investments in the NHSN for at least 10 years despite the exponential expansion of its utilization since its inception. Increased funding is critical to ensure CDC's continued efforts toward eliminating HAIs and optimizing antibiotic prescribing practices.

We urge you to invest \$200 million in the Antibiotic Resistance Solutions Initiative (ARSI). To combat the post-antibiotic era in which we now find ourselves, aggressive strategies must be adopted to make meaningful progress against the threat of AR. The ARSI supports 50 state health departments, six large city health departments, and Puerto Rico to detect, respond, and contain antibiotic-resistant pathogens. Increasing investments in ARSI would enable them to sustainably expand epidemiology, laboratory, and diagnostics capacity. The ARSI also includes the Antibiotic Resistance Lab Network which is comprised of seven regional labs that monitor and detect organisms that are resistant to most or all antibiotics.

We urge you to invest \$57 million in the Advanced Molecular Detection (AMD) Initiative. AMD supports collaborative relationships between academic research institutions and public health to facilitate the development of new tools that detect disease faster, identify outbreaks sooner, and protect people from emerging and evolving disease threats. It informs vaccine and diagnostics development for new and emerging diseases as well as identify and track AR. Right now, AMD plays a critical role in the response to the growing global outbreak of COVID-19. An increased investment in AMD will empower state and local health departments with the ability to quickly

develop targeted prevention and control strategies during an outbreak caused by emerging pathogen.

We urge you to invest \$100 million in Public Health Data and IT Modernization.

Congress recognized that our nation's public health data and infrastructure was dangerously antiquated by appropriating \$50 million in new investments in FY 2020. This new investment allows CDC to support state, local, tribal, and territorial health departments to begin the process of moving away from sluggish, manual, paper-based data collection to seamless, automated IT systems as well as recruit and retain skilled data scientists to use them. However, in order to fully meet the current needs of our nation's public health data infrastructure, Congress will need to invest \$100 million every year for the next 10 years to ensure public health professionals are consistently able to get ahead and stay ahead of emerging and urgent HAI and AR threats. These sustained investments will also allow policymakers to make better decisions informed by the expertise of the public health workforce and enabled by strong data and health information systems.

We urge you to invest \$100.4 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and

Quality's (AHRQ's) patient safety and research portfolio. Specifically, we are seeking **\$50.2 million for research and preventative strategies for healthcare-associated infections, \$13.9 million for research and strategies to combat antibiotic resistant bacteria, and \$73.8 million to support investigator-initiated research grants.** AHRQ is the only federal agency that funds research to study the most efficient way to deliver healthcare while also improving the quality of patient care and outcomes across the healthcare continuum. Much of this research is conducted by

leading medical investigators at academic centers and other institutions of research across the country. Congress has prioritized medical research investments for treatment and cures over the last several years. While we commend these investments in innovation, Congress must also prioritize research in discovering the best methods for preventing HAIs and AR to ensure a safe environment for delivering treatments and cures. AHRQ also provides tools and training to implement research findings for the everyday care of patients.

We urge you to invest \$230 million for Broad Spectrum Antimicrobials and CARB-X at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA).

The BARDA Broad Spectrum Antimicrobials program and CARB-X, programs within the office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), have demonstrated that successful development of new FDA approved antibiotics is possible. Without this investment, modern medical advances that have become standard practice, such as chemotherapy and organ transplantation which can only be sustained by the availability of antibiotics, may become unavailable due to the high risk of infection.

The importance of investing in preparing for and responding to emerging infectious disease threats has been highlighted in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges we are facing today with the growing prevalence in AR will get worse without new investments. Preventing infections, improving antibiotic use, detecting threats, and implementing interventions are essential to ensuring public health. The societies thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of clinicians and researchers who champion infection prevention and antibiotic resistance.