BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
UNITED STATES SENATOR
MARYLAND

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510–2004

June 10, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
The Honorable Richard Shelby, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

As the Subcommittee prepares to mark-up the Fiscal Year 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with recommendations on prioritizing programmatic funding. I recognize the severe limitations the subcommittee faces in these challenging financial circumstances, and appreciate your willingness to consider these high priority programs for funding in FY 2012.

LABOR

The Community Services Employment for Older Americans program also has a proven record of putting Americans to work by providing part time community service jobs at minimum wage to low-income adults 55 and over. Participants provide several millions of community service hours annually in over 30,000 local agencies fulfilling all manner of needs from library aides to senior nutrition programs. The program serves almost every county with low administrative costs, and, according to a January 2011 GAO report, does not overlap with any other federal workforce development program. Based on the demonstrated effectiveness of the program and the positive effect it has had on the lives of many thousands of vulnerable seniors, I request funding of no less than $600 million for this program in FY2012.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The mission of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been to protect and promote quality of life through the prevention and control of disease, injury and disability. Reductions to the CDC budget threaten public health research and the safety of American citizens. I request that the Committee provide funding for CDC at or above FY2010 levels.

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Health disparties exact an emormous human and economic toll. Our overall health status depends on our abillity to improve the health of our fastest-growing communities and eliminate the disparities that are evidenced by higher rates of infant mortality and debilitating diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Now, with the HHS Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities, HHS has a road map for eliminating these indefensible health disparities.

I request that that the HHS Offices of Minority Health be allowed to continue this encouraging work with the provision of full funding of these offices within the six relevant HHS sub-agencies. Please consider the inclusion of the following language in report to accompany the FY2012 LHHSE appropriations bill:

> *HHS Offices of Minority Health: The Committee is encouraged by the implementation of the HHS Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities and National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity. The Committee strongly supports full funding for the Offices of Minority Health in the Office of the Secretary, AHRQ, CDC, CMS, FDA, HRSA, and SAMHSA, which are charged with leading the strategy. Comprehensive efforts to increase awareness, research, health information technology, and diversity in the health workforce; improved access to preventive services; and focus on addressing the social determinants of health will be beneficial. The Secretary is encouraged also to work closely with communities and the public and private sectors to end longstanding and costly disparities.*

Additional Health Issues: Breast Cancer, Asthma and Oral Health

It is only in the last few years that doctors and researchers studying breast cancer have concluded that breast cancer is not one disease, but many different forms of cancer all originating in the breast. Depending on its stage of diagnosis, triple negative breast cancer can be extremely aggressive and more likely to recur and metastasize than other subtypes of breast cancer. Additionally, this type of breast cancer has a disproportionate prevalence among African-American women. I ask the Committee to direct the National Cancer Institute to direct resources to research, detection, treatment, and prevention of this type of breast cancer.

Suggested Report Language:

> *NCI: Breast Cancer: The Committee is extremely concerned about the tragic toll of triple negative breast cancer. It is the most aggressive and misunderstood form of breast cancer and has a disproportionate prevalence among African American women. The Committee strongly encourages NCI to increase research, knowledge and awareness; further unravel the causes; advance prevention, detection, diagnosis, care, and treatment; and work in collaboration with ORWH, NIMHD, OMH, and OWH to help improve treatment and survival rates.*

Asthma is one of the most prevalent lung diseases, affecting millions of Americans including 6.8 million children. In the last decade, asthma has been recognized as a pressing public health concern and efforts to reduce morbidity and mortality rates have been underway.

There is still much to learn about best practices and long-term effects for asthma treatment. I ask that the Committee direct the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to focus resources on these concerns and to collaborate with other agencies as appropriate.

Suggested Report Language:

NHLBI: Asthma can result in hospitalization and even death. Its prevalence and burden are high among African Americans, Latinos, and other communities of color. Children are especially hard-hit. Concerned about the adverse impact of long-acting medications; as well as that of prescribed steroids on overall health, growth, and development, the Committee urges NHLBI to increase research, awareness, and knowledge in an effort to advance more effective life-saving and life-enhancing treatments, and to collaborate with FDA, NIAID, NICHD, NIMHD and OMH in this regard.

Dental care is an important part of appropriate medical care. In 2007, 12-year-old Deamonte Driver from Prince George's County, Maryland, died from a brain infection caused by a tooth abscess. In the United States of America, we shouldn't lose kids because they don't have access to a dentist. Also, we must prepare dentists to address the increasingly complex dental health needs of an aging population. Thus, I request that the Committee include report language to address these key issues facing the dental profession and provide increased funding for general and pediatric dentistry training opportunities.

Suggested Report Language:

General Practice and Pediatric Dental Residencies (Title VII, Sect. 748 PHA): *The Committee provides $25 M for Training in General, Pediatric and Public Health Dentistry, with not less than $8 million each for general and pediatric dentistry. The increased funding will expand training opportunities for advanced training for dentists and provide funding for faculty loan repayment programs. The Committee is supportive of these programs because it recognizes that there is a shortage of pediatric and public health dentists. Dentists who complete a general residency receive additional training which allows them to take on complex cases of patients with autoimmune or systemic diseases. The Committee continues its concerns about the growing aging population and has included funding so that HRSA can initiate training programs that target vulnerable populations in risk-based clinical disease management of all populations.*

EDUCATION

I am concerned by the recent cuts to Career and Technical Education (CTE) funds. Students must be prepared for the future workforce where technical employment is a fast growing sector of the economy. CTE programs provide opportunities for students to explore science, technology, engineering, and math related career options and gain an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success. Significant cuts to CTE funding limits local school systems' and community colleges' ability to keep curriculum and instructional materials current and relevant, to provide professional development, and leverage student access to industry certification. I ask for funding at FY10 levels or higher for this critical need.

I would also like to highlight what I believe to be another significant need in education today. Although every state has education standards that include civics and government, in recent years civic learning has increasingly been undermined in public education. Further, there exists a significant achievement gap in civic learning between socio-economic strata. We need a competitive grant program for civic learning that will spur innovation and new teaching strategies to combat the achievement gap. I would request that the Committee provide an adequate amount of funding to address this important issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my programmatic funding priorities with the Subcommittee. If you require additional information about any of the information presented here, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact Jodi Schwartz or Mike Burke (4-4524) in my office. Respecting the challenges you face as you mark up the FY2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, I remain grateful for your assistance and that of your excellent staffs.

Sincerely,

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

BLC:mb