

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 16, 2024

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell:

We write to urge action on the reauthorization of the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA), which has broad implications for the country's preparedness and response to public health threats. Critical preparedness and response authorities lapsed in 2023, and the recent reports of human infection with H5N1 avian flu that is highly pathogenic in birds, as confirmed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), underscore the need for Congress to quickly renew this legislation¹. We must reauthorize PAHPA to ensure that the United States is prepared to meet the challenges we face today and the potential public health emergencies of tomorrow.

The rapid response of the public health community in the face of the evolving bird flu outbreak highlights the importance of our health preparedness infrastructure. While the CDC has advised that the bird flu does not currently pose a risk to the public at large, public health experts continue to warn that the bird flu could mutate further and eventually pose a serious threat to humans. Studies indicate that bird flu infections in humans may lead to further health concerns, including acute respiratory distress syndrome and other serious conditions². Prompt congressional action will directly strengthen our national readiness and response in the face of an evolving threat like bird flu.

The bipartisan Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act advanced by the Senate HELP Committee would renew and build upon PAHPA to further improve our emergency response capacity. PAHPA, which was first passed in 2006, provided foundational resources to states and jurisdictions for early warning, prevention, and preparedness. Each subsequent reauthorization of PAHPA has made improvements to allow the Administration for Preparedness and Response and other HHS agencies to better anticipate threats and act swiftly during an emergency. The reauthorization bills advanced in both House and Senate committees would strengthen our national approach to ever-changing and emerging threats.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Update: Human Infection with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus in Texas](#), April 2024

² Charostad et al., *A comprehensive review of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1: An imminent threat at doorstep*, *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease*, Volume 55, (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmaid.2023.102638>

Congress has a responsibility to continually improve the country's ability to identify and mitigate fast-evolving threats to public health. We look forward to working with Leadership to act on this legislation as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maggie Hassan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mitt Romney". The signature is cursive and stylized, with a prominent "M" and "R".

Mitt Romney
United States Senator