

1 March 2, 2018

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4 The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
5 Secretary, The Department of Health and Human Services  
6 200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
7 Washington, DC 20201

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9 Dear Secretary Azar,

10 On behalf of the Presidential Advisory Council on Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria (PACCARB),  
11 we wish to bring to your attention two pivotal issues that concern both veterinary and human medicine  
12 that, if left unaddressed, would undermine the collective U.S. government effort to combating antibiotic  
13 resistance. **In brief, the current federal efforts that are using One Health approaches to fight  
14 antibiotic-resistance are at risk of being undermined by significant loss or redirection of funding.**

15 The National Action Plan on Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria (NAP) includes critical milestones  
16 that address issues related to both human and animal health. Protecting human health by ensuring  
17 animal health is the crux of this One Health approach, and is exemplified by the CDC's inclusion of  
18 commonly food borne infections (including *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, and *Shigella*) in their list of the  
19 top drug-resistant threats to the United States.<sup>1</sup> The PACCARB members applaud the increases in funds  
20 during the last budget cycle in support of key programs and activities that help agencies achieve the  
21 milestones set forth in the NAP. Because of this support, researchers and educators have made critical  
22 progress to address the profound problem of antibiotic resistance and a new positive momentum has  
23 been achieved. However, PACCARB members are deeply concerned that the hard-earned gains that  
24 have been made in combating resistance may not continue, and important results of new programs that  
25 that were recently started may never be realized.

26 The PACCARB believes that we are at a strategic point in time for advancing our collective work to  
27 reduce antibiotic resistance, find alternatives to antibiotics, prevent infection and preserve effective  
28 antibiotics for both animal and human populations. The upcoming fiscal allocation decisions to be made  
29 may have dramatic negative impacts on the United States' ability to address antibiotic-resistance if  
30 funds are diverted from their current missions. Therefore, we propose the following:

- 31 **1. The 2017 funding levels for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Antibiotic  
32 Resistance Solutions Initiative (ARSI) and for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality  
33 (AHRQ) healthcare-associated infection and antibiotic-resistance (HAI/AR) programs must be  
34 maintained or increased in 2018 and beyond.**

35 In the past decade, we have seen encouraging early declines in occurrences of antibiotic-resistant  
36 bacterial infections in hospitals, largely as a result of programs initiated by the CDC and AHRQ. These  
37 programs have led to much lower rates of device-related (e.g., intravenous catheter) and other  
38 healthcare-associated infections (e.g., MRSA bloodstream infections). **All of these gains will be lost if  
39 the critical mission funding for CDC and AHRQ HAI/AR programs is not maintained.** The CDC's ARSI,

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<sup>1</sup> CDC source available at: [https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/biggest\\_threats.html](https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/biggest_threats.html)

40 which funds state-level HAI/AR prevention programs, will potentially lose much of its \$163 million FY17  
41 appropriation in 2018. Additionally, AHRQ faces a potentially significant budget cut which threatens the  
42 critical research and the implementation of HAI/AR prevention strategies.

43 Cuts to the CDC's ARSI funding will jeopardize the success of its numerous efforts, such as the  
44 nationwide Antibiotic Resistance Laboratory Network and investments in infrastructure to effectively  
45 detect and respond to HAI/AR occurrences. AHRQ-funded research has identified effective approaches  
46 for preventing HAI and the spread of AR, and loss of AHRQ funding would prevent translation and  
47 implementation of these strategies. All of these outcomes would negatively impact our goal of  
48 eliminating the approximately 2 million infections due to antibiotic-resistant bacteria that occur in the  
49 United States each year.

50 **2. The dedicated funding provided by U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food**  
51 **and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) to support research focused on antimicrobial-resistance in**  
52 **agriculture, from farm to fork, must continue.**

53 In 2017, NIFA provided substantial amounts of funding dedicated to supporting research on  
54 antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which enabled significant gains in our understanding of the emergence  
55 and dissemination of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and provided knowledge used for on-farm programs to  
56 prevent and reduce antibiotic resistance. **It is imperative that research funds be made available to**  
57 **build on this exceptional progress, which will improve animal health and welfare, food safety and**  
58 **security, and environmental and public health.**

59 The PACCARB understands that NIFA is considering the integration of current AMR research programs  
60 into a new and broader program in Sustainable Agriculture Systems (SAS). While we support the concept  
61 of institutional trans-disciplinary research teams, which could enhance a One Health approach to AMR,  
62 **we strongly encourage the USDA to continue with its specified ongoing AMR research grants and, in**  
63 **addition, designate some of the new SAS funds explicitly for AMR projects.** The total funding levels  
64 dedicated for AMR should be at least equal to those of 2017, and hopefully greater, owing to its  
65 tremendous positive impact on both animal and human health, and the great need in the field.

66 The PACCARB remains diligent in its mission to combat antibiotic resistance, and will continue to  
67 support our federal partners aligned to a One Health approach in fulfilling the milestones as set in the  
68 NAP. Your support in preserving and expanding essential funding to programs that specifically address  
69 the emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance will help ensure the preservation of our nation's  
70 health—across the human, animal and environmental domains—in the face of this imminent public  
71 health and security threat to the U.S. and globally.

72 Regards,

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74 Martin J. Blaser, M.D.  
75 Chair

Lonnie J. King, D.V.M., M.S., M.P.A., ACVPM  
Vice Chair

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77 cc: Sonny Perdue, D.V.M., U.S. Secretary of Agriculture