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February 3, 2025

Dear Senator,

The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSa) greatly appreciates your careful consideration of individuals nominated to lead the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and its agencies. To help inform your consideration of nominees, as well as congressional collaboration and oversight of health policy, we write to share some additional background and information on infectious diseases (ID) related to some of the issues that arose during the confirmation hearings for Robert F. Kennedy Jr. IDSa represents over 13,000 physicians, scientists and other health care and public health professionals who specialize in the prevention, detection and treatment of infectious diseases, including infections associated with cancer treatment, organ transplants, pacemakers and artificial joints; outbreak preparedness and response; and serious medical conditions described below.

**National Security and Infectious Diseases:** Investments in ID research are essential to deliver breakthroughs in new vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics necessary to address biothreats that could be weaponized by global adversaries, dangerous antimicrobial-resistant pathogens and pathogens with pandemic potential.

**Chronic Disease and Infectious Diseases:** Infectious diseases and chronic conditions are linked in several ways, which can complicate treatment and outcomes. ID research, public health interventions and access to care by ID physicians are crucial to efforts to address chronic disease. Infectious diseases can cause or contribute to the development of chronic conditions, including type 1 diabetes, asthma, heart disease, cancer, kidney disease, gastrointestinal disease, and bone and joint disease. Chronic conditions make individuals more susceptible to infections and worse outcomes. ID physician care and ID research are critical to preventing and managing chronic conditions.

**Substance Use and Infectious Disease:** ID specialists are also integral to our nation's response to the opioid epidemic with an increasing number being dually trained in ID and addiction medicine. ID specialists lead responses to control HIV and viral hepatitis [outbreaks](#) linked to drug use in addition to providing direct patient care to individuals with substance use disorders to prevent, diagnose and treat infections, such as endocarditis and skin and soft tissue infections, and to conduct research to better inform responses.

**Vaccines:** Vaccines are one of the greatest public health accomplishments in history and are responsible for the largest gains in human life expectancy. Vaccines are our best defense against a wide range of infectious diseases, including measles, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, influenza, RSV and more. Vaccines are backed by decades of scientific data demonstrating their overwhelming safety and efficacy and are some of the most rigorously tested and monitored public health interventions. It is critical that individuals have scientifically accurate information about vaccines and about

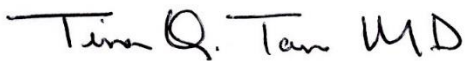
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the serious harms of vaccine-preventable diseases to make informed decisions for themselves and their families.

Attached please find additional information on the above issues. We hope you find this information useful and that we can count on your support for investments in the ID workforce, including clinicians, researchers and public health professionals. During this Congress, we look forward to working with you to protect our nation's health with investments in ID research in addition to ensuring an adequate ID workforce by reauthorizing and funding the Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program and improving Medicare reimbursement and value-based care opportunities for ID physicians who are at the lower end of the compensation range for medical specialties due to the current system favoring procedures. If you have any questions or would like to connect with an ID physician or scientist in your state, please contact Lisa Cox, IDSA's director of government relations, at [lcox@idsociety.org](mailto:lcox@idsociety.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Q. Tan MD". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tina Tan, MD, FIDSA, FPIDS, FAAP  
President, IDSA

### **Examples of Infectious Diseases That Can Cause or Contribute to the Development of Chronic Diseases**

- Viral infections can lead to type 1 diabetes due to damage to insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.
- [Studies](#) suggest that certain respiratory pathogens may contribute to the development and progression of asthma.
- [Up to 40% of patients with chronic hepatitis B virus infection](#) develop serious complications, such as cirrhosis and liver cancer.
- Human papillomavirus is the leading cause of cervical cancer in nearly 95% of patients and can also cause head, neck and rectal cancers.
- Approximately [1 in 5 peptic ulcers](#) is associated with *Helicobacter pylori* infection, which is increasingly resistant to available antibiotics.
- Patients with chronic urinary tract infections (UTIs) and kidney infections can develop chronic kidney dysfunction.
- HIV and herpes viruses can increase the risk of developing lymphoma.

### **Examples of Chronic Conditions That Can Make Individuals More Susceptible to Infections and to Worse Outcomes From Infections**

- Adults with heart disease have a higher risk of hospitalization, heart attack, stroke and death within seven days of contracting influenza.
- Adults with diabetes have a three times higher risk of death and a six times higher risk of hospitalization due to influenza.
- During the 2009 H1N1 influenza (swine flu) pandemic, 44% of children hospitalized with influenza had asthma.
- [Infections](#) are a primary or associated cause of death in nearly half of cancer deaths.
- Patients with diabetes are at higher risk for many types of infections, including respiratory infections, UTIs, endocarditis (heart valve infection), and infections of the skin, bones and joints — often with limb loss and reduced independence.
- Patients with chronic conditions are at significantly increased risk of developing antimicrobial-resistant infections, which dramatically increase the cost of care and can spread easily in hospitals and long-term care facilities.

### **Data Demonstrating the Overwhelming Safety and Efficacy of Vaccines**

[Safety of Vaccines Used for Routine Immunization in the United States: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#)

[Impact of Vaccines: Health, Economic and Social Perspectives](#)

[Vaccination and All-Cause Child Mortality](#)

[Contribution of Vaccination to Improved Survival and Health: Modelling 50 Years of the Expanded Programme on Immunization](#)

[Successful Vaccines. Current Topics in Microbiology and Immunology](#)

[The Complementary Roles of Phase 3 Trials and Post-Licensure Surveillance in the Evaluation of New Vaccines](#)