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October 22, 2012

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The Honorable Mike Thompson
House of Representatives
231 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Join the Congressional Tuberculosis (TB) Caucus

Dear Representative Thompson:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) urges you to join the new Congressional TB Caucus formed by Representatives Eliot Engel (D-NY), Gene Green (D-TX) and Don Young (R-AK). The Caucus was formed to reassert our country's commitment to stop TB in the United States (U.S.) and to respond to the global threat of multi-drug resistant and totally drug resistant strains of TB.

TB is not a disease of the past, especially in California. There are approximately 11,000 active TB cases reported annually in the U.S., and approximately 11 million U.S. Citizens with latent TB infection. California is the state with the most cases of TB, accounting for 20% of U.S. TB cases. When a person with contagious TB coughs infectious droplets into the air, anyone breathing that air can become infected with TB. Even though TB is treatable, every other day, a Californian dies with TB. California TB programs have been making steady progress over the last two decades toward reducing the numbers of TB cases, but funding cuts are threatening this important work. In the 1980's and 1990's, when public health TB programs were cut too deeply, California TB cases surged from a nadir of about 3,500 in 1983 to 5,400 cases in 1992, a 50% increase. It took a decade and more than 347 million dollars from federal and state sources to get the California TB case numbers back below 3,500 in 2001. We do not want to repeat this costly mistake in California.

By joining the TB caucus, you will help keep Californians healthy and safe. The public health TB programs in California's state and local governments ensure that every TB patient in California completes TB treatment, assure that Californians who have been exposed to TB are evaluated and have access to prevention therapy, and stop the spread of TB in California Communities. Because California is an important gateway to global commerce and travel, TB will continue to be a public safety concern for Californians until it is eliminated globally.

CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Public Health, other departments, boards, commissions, and officials of the federal, state and local agencies, the Legislature and other organizations on all matters affecting health. CCLHO membership consists of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions.

Help us fight TB by joining the Congressional Caucus. For more information about the TB in your district, contact Julie Higashi, President of the California TB Controller's Association at Julie.Higashi@ctca.org.

Sincerely,

Wilma Wooten, MD, MPH
President
California Conference of Local Health Officers