

PRESERVATION OF ANTIBIOTICS
FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT ACT**HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 8, 2007

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that is critically important in preventing our current stock of antibiotics from becoming obsolete. As a mother, grandmother, and microbiologist, I cannot stress the urgency of this problem enough.

Seven classes of antibiotics that are considered medically important for humans are currently approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for nontherapeutic use in animal agriculture. Among them are penicillin, tetracyclines, macrolides, lincosamides, streptogramins, aminoglycosides, and sulfonamides. These classes of antibiotics are among the most critically important in our arsenal of defense against potentially fatal diseases.

Penicillins, for example, are used to treat infections ranging from strep throat to meningitis. Macrolides and Sulfonamides are used to prevent secondary infections in patients with AIDS and to treat pneumonia in HIV-infected patients. Tetracyclines are used to treat people potentially exposed to anthrax.

Despite their importance in human medicine, these drugs are added to animal feed as growth promotants and for routine disease prevention. This kind of habitual, nontherapeutic use of antibiotics has been conclusively linked to a growing number of incidents of antimicrobial-resistant infections in humans, and may be contaminating ground water with resistant bacteria in rural areas.

The legislation I am introducing today, the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act, would phase out the use of the seven classes of medically significant antibiotics that are currently approved for nontherapeutic use in animal agriculture. Make no mistake, this bill would in no way infringe upon the use of these drugs to treat a sick animal. It simply proscribes their nontherapeutic use.

Although the FDA could withdraw its approval for these antibiotics, its record of reviewing currently approved drugs under existing procedures indicate that it would take nearly a century to get these medically important antibiotics out of the feed given to food producing animals. In October 2000, for example, the FDA began consideration of a proposal to withdraw its approval for the therapeutic use of fluoroquinolones in poultry. The review is still ongoing, and under its regulations, the FDA must review each class of antibiotics separately.

Unfortunately, upcoming actions by the FDA could make us less, not more safe. As antimicrobial resistance is on the rise, the FDA is considering an application to permit the use of a fourth-generation cephalosporin, cefquinome, in animal agriculture. Fourth-generation cephalosporins are used to treat food borne illnesses, including E. Coli and Salmonella. In Europe, where cefquinome has been approved for use in animal agriculture, scientists have noticed an increase in resistant bacteria. Already, the emerging strains of resistant bacteria are reaching a crisis level here in the United States. That the FDA is currently con-

sidering approval of a drug that will only make humans more vulnerable to resistant bacteria underscores the need for this legislation.

Madam Speaker, when we go to the grocery store to pick up dinner, we should be able to buy our food without worrying that eating it will expose our family to potentially deadly bacteria that will no longer respond to our medical treatments. Unless we act now, we will unwittingly be permitting animals to serve as incubators for resistant bacteria.

It is time for Congress to stand with scientists, the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, and the National Academy of Sciences and do something to address the spread of resistant bacteria. We cannot afford for our medicines to become obsolete.

I urge my colleagues to support the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act to protect the integrity of our antibiotics and the health of American families+.

INTRODUCTION OF "WITNESS SECURITY AND PROTECTION ACT OF 2007"

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 8, 2007

Mr. CUMMINGS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce the "Witness Security and Protection Act of 2007," to attempt to provide protection for some of our Nation's bravest citizens.

Last year, 38-year old John Dowery of East Baltimore, a murder witness, was shot and killed after having Thanksgiving dinner with his family.

Two years ago, Baltimore Police Detective Thomas Newman was murdered following his testimony in a shooting trial.

Three years ago, Edna McAber of North Baltimore survived a series of violent attacks in apparent retaliation for her efforts to drive criminals out of her community.

And in perhaps one of the most heart-breaking incidences: Four years ago, drug dealers in East Baltimore firebombed the Dawson family home in an attempt to silence them—killing mother, father, and their five young children.

Make no mistake, Madam Speaker: Witness intimidation in Baltimore City is not dreamt up by producers of HBO's critically acclaimed drama "The Wire." The threat is real—and the reality is horrific.

To be sure, criminals in Baltimore City produced their own DVD in 2004 entitled "Stop the Snitching." It depicts grotesque images of three bullet-ridden, bloody corpses accompanied by the phrase "snitch prevention."

Sadly, my hometown of Baltimore is not the only community plagued by this horrific reality. The problem is pervasive.

The National Institute of Justice finds that intimidation of victims and witnesses is a major problem for 51 percent of prosecutors in large jurisdictions (counties with populations greater than 250,000) and 43 percent of prosecutors in small jurisdictions (counties with populations between 50,000 and 250,000).

Further, prosecutors estimate that witness intimidation occurs in up to 75 to 100 percent of the violent crimes committed in some gang-dominated neighborhoods.

Violent retaliation against witnesses and informers threatens the very fabric of our criminal justice system. Known murders walk the streets every day because we lack the evidence necessary to bring them to justice.

Thankfully, witness protection programs can provide law enforcement with an indispensable tool in combating crime and addressing witness intimidation.

The Federal Witness Security Program, established in 1970 and administered by the Department of Justice, has successfully carried out its charge to protect witnesses testifying in extremely serious Federal cases.

Under the program, the United States Marshals Service (USMS) provides witnesses and their families with long-term protection, relocation, new identities, housing, employment, medical treatment, and funds to cover their most essential needs.

In over 30 years, not a single witness that followed security procedures was harmed while being protected by the program. More to the point, cases involving the testimony of the WSP participants have an 89 percent conviction rate.

In contrast, State witness protection programs are severely under-funded and enjoy virtually no Federal support.

While non-Federal witnesses can participate in the federal program under certain conditions, States are required to reimburse the Federal Government for the cost of providing such protection unless a waiver is granted.

As a result, State and local prosecutors often must choose between funding investigations or funding costly, but necessary witness protection programs. This often leads to some jurisdictions providing no witness protection at all.

No one wins when law enforcement officials are forced to make such choices.

That is why I am reintroducing the "Witness Security and Protection Act of 2007." Senator CHUCK SCHUMER of New York has reintroduced a companion bill to this legislation in the Senate, S. 79. It also enjoys the support of the National District Attorneys Association.

The "Witness Security and Protection Act of 2007" would establish within the USMS a Short-Term State Witness Protection Program tailored to meet the needs of witnesses testifying in State and local trials involving homicide, a serious violent felony or a serious drug offense.

The Act would also authorize \$90 million per year in competitive grants for the next 3 years. State and local district attorneys and the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, can use these funds to provide witness protection or pay the cost of enrolling their witnesses in the Short-Term State Witness Protection Program within the USMS.

Grants under this legislation would only be awarded to prosecutors in States with high homicide rates to ensure we target those most in need of Federal support.

Improving protection for State and local witnesses will move us one step closer toward alleviating the fears of and threats to prospective witnesses, and help to safeguard our communities from violence.

While we cannot bring back all those who suffered in the face of witness intimidation, we can honor their sacrifice by trying to prevent future tragedies.