



American Public Health Association

Working for a Healthier World

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September 28, 2005

The Honorable Barack Obama
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Obama:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association (APHA), the oldest, largest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world, dedicated to protecting all Americans and their communities from preventable, serious health threats and assuring community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities and preventive health services are universally accessible in the United States, I write in support of S.1638; the Hurricane Katrina Emergency Health Workforce Act of 2005.

APHA has long recognized the importance of public health infrastructure, especially in the event of a health emergency or natural disaster. During this time, we are faced with the unprecedented natural catastrophe of hurricane Katrina, and must place increased efforts in restoring this infrastructure and improving our emergency response system for the future. We applaud your strides in the Senate to place a focus on the assessment of public health and the mobilization of the workforce in the wake of Katrina. Establishing a National Emergency Health Professionals Volunteer Corps and a health professionals database will provide an adequate supply of health professionals and keep recovery efforts both coordinated and comprehensive.

The United States currently suffers from an insufficient and unsatisfactory emergency response system, leaving public health infrastructure vulnerable to significant damage. Therefore, measures are needed that increase the capacity of the health professionals in order to effectively and efficiently protect the health of the nation. Public health preparedness and public health services and programs are inextricably linked, and must be mutually supported in order to protect the health and safety of the public. APHA believes that the Hurricane Katrina Emergency Health Workforce Act of 2005, if enacted into law, would serve as a vital step towards averting future disorganized relief efforts.

Thank you for your attention to and leadership on this important public health issue. We look forward to working with you to move this legislation forward this year.

Sincerely,

Georges Benjamin, MD, FACP
Executive Director