May 11, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), we write in opposition to the rescission of funding for the Ebola response as currently contained in H.R. 3, the “Spending Cuts to Expired and Unnecessary Programs Act.”

The May 8, 2018 transmittal from the White House proposes that $252 million in prior year balances of emergency funding appropriated in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 for the Ebola response be rescinded because the funds are no longer needed “because the Ebola response has largely concluded” and that the rescission would not impact the Ebola response.

It would be a mistake to rescind the $252 million that remains of the $5.4 billion in emergency Ebola funding that was appropriated in FY 2015. This week, the Democratic Republic of the Congo declared an Ebola outbreak in that country, prompting fears that the epidemic could spread. Reportedly, the epidemic may have been underway for days or weeks before the declaration. We cannot afford another situation where it takes months for the United States to respond to a global outbreak of a deadly nature. The first cases of the previous Ebola outbreak were identified in March 2014. Congress did not appropriate funding to respond to the crisis until December 2014, after Ebola had already penetrated the U.S. border.
Congress has heard from emergency health preparedness officials and experts that a public health emergency contingency fund is needed so the United States can respond to public health emergencies, both declared and for which there is significant potential, in a timely manner. The rescission of $252 million is shortsighted, contrary to these requests, and puts the American public at risk unnecessarily to current and emerging health threats.

The ASM calls upon you and your congressional colleagues to continue to make available the balance of FY 2015 Ebola emergency funding, and to work through the FY 2019 appropriations process to create a robust public health emergency contingency fund that allows the United States to respond rapidly to Ebola and other pandemics that threaten our homeland.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Camille Bonta, ASM policy consultant, at cbonta@summithealthconsulting.com or (202) 320-3658.

Sincerely,

Peggy Cotter, Ph.D.
President
American Society for Microbiology

Stefano Bertuzzi, Ph.D., MPH
CEO
American Society for Microbiology