February 4, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education
Labor and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

The undersigned organizations, institutions, and companies representing a broad range of scientific, public health, and clinical professionals, write to express our support for S. 3534, the Tracking Pathogens Act, and thank you for incorporating this bill text into Title II, Section 212 of the PREVENT Pandemics Act discussion draft under consideration in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. Significantly boosting U.S. genetic surveillance and viral sequencing is key to moving beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and effectively responding to future challenges not only associated with novel and evolving infectious diseases, but also seasonal threats, antimicrobial resistance and foodborne pathogens.

The emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 omicron variant underscores the need for sustained investments to bolster sequencing capacity to identify, track, and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 strains. We are especially pleased that the bill builds on the work initiated under the American Rescue Plan by supporting and enhancing existing genomic sequencing and surveillance activities, supporting continued partnerships between public health entities and the broader academic research and clinical laboratory ecosystem, and codifying the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Centers of Excellence in Genomic Sequencing and Molecular Epidemiology. The bill also ensures this work can be sustained by setting forth a strong, multi-year funding authorization level of $175 million for the Advanced Molecular Detection (AMD) program at the CDC. This investment, which will ensure that we are far better prepared for future outbreaks, is long overdue.

Since 2014, the AMD program has employed next generation sequencing (NGS) to bring the concept of precision medicine to bear for “precision public health.” AMD has given us new tools to detect disease faster, identify outbreaks sooner, and protect people and the food supply from emerging and evolving disease threats. The Tracking Pathogens Act will ensure that this critical work can continue now and into the future.

We thank you for your leadership and support for Senator Baldwin’s and Senator Cassidy’s Tracking Pathogens Act, an important provision of the HELP Committee’s bipartisan PREVENT Pandemics Act discussion draft. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to sustain robust pathogen genomic surveillance through CDC’s AMD program and its partnerships.

Sincerely,

AdvaMedDx
American Association for Clinical Chemistry
American Association of Bioanalysts
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Medical Technologists
American Public Health Association

American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Virology
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Molecular Pathology
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Biophysical Society
Clear Labs
Coalition for the Life Sciences
College of American Pathologists
Emory University
Gingko Bioworks
Helix
HIV Medicine Association
Illumina
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Labcorp
National Independent Laboratory Association
Pacific Biosciences
Psomagen
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
The Gerontological Society of America
The Jackson Laboratory
Thermo Fisher Scientific
Trust for America's Health
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health
UW-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine

Cc: The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
The Honorable Bill Cassidy