COALITION TO STOP FLU APPLAUDS INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO BETTER PROTECT AMERICA FROM SEASONAL AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

With influenza rates currently at their highest level in more than a decade, House bill strengthens the federal government’s influenza ecosystem

WASHINGTON, D.C.— December 8, 2022 — The Coalition to Stop Flu, a multi-sector advocacy coalition dedicated to ending deaths from seasonal and pandemic influenza, applauds the Protecting America from Seasonal and Pandemic Influenza Act (The Influenza Act), introduced today in the House of Representatives by Congressman Rick Larsen (D-WA-02), along with Representatives Deborah Ross (D-NC-02), Ami Bera (D-CA-07), Salud Carbajal (D-CA-24), Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA-44) and Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC-At-Large). The legislation comes at a critical moment, as influenza rates are at their highest level in more than a decade and many hospitals have been pushed to the brink. The bill is the first comprehensive effort to enact proactive federal policy changes to stop flu deaths in our lifetime.

“For far too long, our country has seemingly accepted tens of thousands of annual deaths from flu as inevitable,” said former Senate Majority Leader and Chairman of the Coalition to Stop Flu Tom Daschle. “And pandemic influenza remains an extraordinary threat to our nation’s health and prosperity. More can, and must, be done. The Influenza Act provides commonsense solutions to improve our ability to prepare for and respond to seasonal and pandemic flu.”

The Influenza Act would take important steps to strengthen and modernize America’s seasonal and pandemic influenza infrastructure, including strengthening and diversifying influenza vaccine development, manufacturing, and supply chain; promoting innovative approaches and use of new technologies to detect, prevent, and respond to influenza; increasing influenza vaccine and therapeutics access and coverage across all populations; and authorizing sustainable funding for the influenza ecosystem.

Data suggests that we could be facing the worst flu season in more than 12 years in the U.S. According to recent estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there have been more than 8 million confirmed cases, 78,000 hospitalizations, and 4,500 deaths from flu this year. Tragically, this includes 14 pediatric deaths. The hospitalization rate for flu this year is higher than it has been since the 2010-2011 season.

“The phrase ’just the flu’ fundamentally misrepresents a virus that kills tens of thousands of Americans – including children – and results in hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and millions of illnesses and missed work days. It’s vital that Congress act to make meaningful advances in innovation and preparedness to ensure access to the best prevention and treatment, build trust, awareness, and equity across all populations, and prevent the economic harm from devastating outbreaks,” said Coalition to Stop Flu Executive Director Niki Carelli.

The Coalition to Stop Flu looks forward to continuing its partnership with Congress and the Administration to secure increased federal funding and enact proactive policy solutions to stop influenza deaths. The Coalition will continue its work to raise awareness and prioritize seasonal and pandemic influenza preparedness by serving as a united voice and trusted resource for policymakers.
About the **Coalition to Stop Flu**
The Coalition to Stop Flu is a multi-sector advocacy coalition dedicated to ending deaths from seasonal and pandemic influenza. The Coalition’s federal policy agenda is aimed at saving lives, saving money, and protecting public health by enhancing the U.S. influenza ecosystem, including ensuring adequate funding for priority influenza programs. The Coalition’s members include Alvogen, the American Heart Association, the American Society for Microbiology, the Association of Public Health Laboratories, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, BD, CSL Seqirus, Families Fighting Flu, Genentech, GSK, the Healthcare Distribution Alliance, Immunize.org, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, Inovio, the National Association of City and County Health Officials, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, Novavax, Sanofi, Trust for America's Health, Vaccinate Your Family, and Vir Biotechnology.

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