



May 17, 2016

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Health

FROM: Committee Majority Staff

RE: Hearing entitled “Examining H.R. 3299, Strengthening Public Health Emergency Response Act”

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

On Thursday, May 19, 2016, at 10:00 a.m. in 2123 Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing entitled “Examining H.R. 3299, Strengthening Public Health Emergency Response Act.”

## **II. WITNESSES**

- Dr. Richard Hackett, Acting Director, Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary in the office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Dr. Michael Mair, Director of Strategic Operations, Office of Counterterrorism and Emerging Threats, Food and Drug Administration; and
- COL Russ Coleman, Ph.D., Joint Program Manager, Medical Countermeasures Systems, Department of Defense.

## **III. BACKGROUND**

H.R. 3299, the Strengthening Public Health Emergency Response Act of 2015, was introduced by Rep. Brooks (R-IN) and Rep. Eshoo (D-CA) in response to a report released by the Blue Ribbon Study on Biodefense, which was released on October 28, 2015. The panel was led by former Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT) and former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge, the first Secretary of Homeland Security. The panel’s report was based on meetings, interviews, and research, which found that our national biodefense strategy and efforts need improvement.<sup>1</sup> The report notes:

The nation has not come to fully appreciate the severity of the biological threat and our leaders have not demonstrated the political will to fully address it. We must address these shortcomings by prioritizing the following areas: 1)

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<sup>1</sup> Bipartisan Report of the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense, *A National Blueprint for Biodefense: Leadership and Major Reform Needed to Optimize Efforts* (Oct. 2015).

coordination and accountability among federal departments and agencies; 2) collaboration between federal and non-federal stakeholders; and 3) innovation that addresses both lingering and novel problems.”<sup>2</sup>

The panel proposed 33 recommendations to improve the U.S. response to biological threats. H.R. 3299 represents a compilation of recommendations within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

The 2014 Ebola outbreak and the current Zika outbreak are just two recent examples of natural biological threats the U.S. has faced. These threats illustrate the importance of the U.S. having an effective and efficient emergency preparedness system in place. Ensuring that the U.S. can respond in a timely and efficient manner is paramount in both public health and national security situations. H.R. 3299 would provide administrative efficiencies and provide incentives to companies to invest in biodefense products so the U.S. is equipped for public health emergencies, such as Ebola, Zika, and biochemical attacks.

#### **IV. STAFF CONTACT**

If you have any questions regarding this hearing, please contact Carly McWilliams with the Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p 26.