AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY

Statement from the American Society for Microbiology
in response to the
House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health Hearing:
"The Fiscal Year 2021 HHS Budget and Oversight of the Coronavirus Outbreak"
February 26, 2020

On behalf of our 30,000 members in the United States and around the world, the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) thanks Chairwoman Anna Eshoo, Ranking Member Michael Burgess and members of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health for holding this hearing on the current novel coronavirus outbreak stemming from Wuhan, China. ASM also thanks Congress for reauthorizing the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness and Innovation Act last year, and for its support through fiscal year 2020 appropriations for public health preparedness and response programs that are crucial to address any public health emergency, especially an international outbreak.

We urge Congress to continue its commitment in fiscal year 2021 to a global health security agenda that recognizes and supports cutting edge research, laboratory capacity, pandemic preparedness and public health response capabilities. The current coronavirus public health emergency illustrates exactly why continued investments are needed across multiple government agencies, including the NIH, CDC, BARDA and the FDA; and it underscores the importance of maintaining open and transparent communication with our international partners. We also urge Congress to ensure that the agencies have the resources to address the ongoing threat through supplemental appropriations.

As the situation continues to unfold, we offer the following additional points to the Subcommittee:

- **We are amidst an event that remains fluid and is changing on a daily, sometimes hourly basis.** It is essential that officials communicate accurate information in a timely manner to protect the public, mitigate spread of the disease and coordinate an effective international response.
- **The development of accurate and rapid diagnostics should be a priority.** Diagnostics enable and inform all aspects of infectious disease outbreak management—from surveillance and detection to response, containment and recovery. Advances in diagnostic technologies, such as next generation sequencing made possible through CDC's Advanced Molecular Detection program, will continue to be essential in our fight against both emerging and persistent infectious disease threats.
- **Laboratories play a critical role in identifying outbreaks and guiding resources for response and should be strengthened**. We are fortunate in the U.S. to have a robust laboratory surveillance system that can screen incoming travelers and identify—and potentially treat—individuals at high risk of spreading infection. This laboratory capacity does not exist in all countries and we must do more now to ensure its progress in low-resource countries.
- **International scientific and public health collaboration is essential.** ASM urges policymakers to ensure that an appropriate balance exists between protecting national security and allowing for continued, safe and legitimate collaboration across borders. Such a balance is necessary to preserve the public health, the public interest and the advancement of science.

As an organization with extensive global public health programs and with scientists and public health workers on the front lines in China and at the source of disease outbreaks around the world, ASM understands first-hand the importance of securing our borders against biothreats. Our world is more interconnected than ever, and microbes know no borders. ASM and its members stand ready to assist the Subcommittee, its members and the Congress as the U.S. continues to respond to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

More information from ASM on nCov2019:

https://www.asm.org/Press-Releases/2020/nCoV2019-Resources

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The American Society for Microbiology is one of the largest single life science societies, composed of 30,000 scientists and health professionals. ASM's mission is to promote and advance the microbial sciences. ASM advances the microbial sciences through conferences, publications, certifications and educational opportunities. It enhances laboratory capacity around the globe through training and resources. It provides a network for scientists in academia, industry and clinical settings. Additionally, ASM promotes a deeper understanding of the microbial sciences to diverse audiences.