



December 8, 2022

Senator Bill Cassidy
United States Senate
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cassidy:

On behalf of patient and physician communities in Louisiana, we wanted to reach out express our appreciation for your work on the increasingly urgent problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). **We urge you co-sponsor the PASTEUR Act** to secure legislative solutions for the rapidly growing threat of drug-resistant bacterial and fungal infections and advocate for its passage this year.

Each year, AMR becomes a more dire global health threat. If left unchecked, these societal and economic losses will continue to worsen.

- At least 2.8 million people suffer from drug-resistant infections each year in the United States, resulting in 35,000 deaths.
- The Lancet medical journal estimates that the global death toll is over one million, more than HIV or malaria.¹

¹ Murray CJL, Ikuta KS, Sharara F, et al. Global burden of bacterial antimicrobial resistance in 2019: a systematic analysis. *The Lancet*. 2022; 399(10325):629-655. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02724-0

- AMR further represents a significant economic burden; the direct healthcare costs of treating just six of the most common multidrug-resistant pathogens in the U.S. is estimated to be \$4.6 billion per year.²
- In 2020, treating people who acquired AMR infections in healthcare settings cost \$88M in direct medical care and another \$80M in economic losses relating to premature death in Louisiana.*

The problem grows more dire in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. AMR infections and related deaths increased by 15% in 2020.³ Treating people who acquired AMR infections in healthcare settings cost \$5.8 billion in direct medical care and another \$7.2 billion in economic losses relating to premature death. Communities of color are at higher risk for hospital-acquired AMR infections and death; nationally, Black patients are 12% and Hispanic patients 24% more likely to die from a hospital-acquired AMR infection compared to whites.⁴

According to a study published recently in the Journal of the American Medical Association, inappropriate prescription of antibiotics to COVID-19 patients was widespread during the first year of the pandemic and remains a concern.⁵ In conjunction with increased use of antibiotics to treat legitimate, secondary bacterial infections, often in medically complex or ventilated patients, this failure to practice appropriate antibiotic stewardship has the potential to accelerate and worsen the AMR threat. This is particularly dangerous for people with weakened immune systems or who are otherwise vulnerable to infection, including cancer patients, transplant recipients, and people with cystic fibrosis and many other chronic conditions.

Unfortunately, market factors unique to antibiotics have rendered the current antimicrobial development pipeline woefully insufficient for counteracting the rising ineffectiveness of existing drugs. Antimicrobials are meant to be prescribed short-term and sparingly, making it challenging for companies to earn a reasonable return on investment. Furthermore, the evolution of drug-resistant “superbugs” frequently renders products obsolete. These difficulties have resulted in multiple companies going bankrupt even after creating an FDA-approved antimicrobial drug, and many others have closed their antimicrobial research programs.

There are, however, solutions to this problem: the PASTEUR Act (S. 2076).

The PASTEUR Act (S. 2076) will advance antimicrobial drug development through the introduction of subscription-based contracts to encourage the production and supply of urgently needed novel antimicrobial products, including antibiotics and antifungals. Under this system, companies will be compensated based on the value of the product created, not the volume used. The PASTEUR Act also strengthens antibiotic stewardship programming, investing directly in small, rural, and critical access health care facilities to help stem this burgeoning crisis.

² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. Combating antimicrobial resistance and protecting the miracle of modern medicine. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26350>.

³ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID-19 U.S Impact on Antimicrobial Resistance. 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/pdf/covid19-impact-report-508.pdf>.

⁴ Partnership to Fight Infectious Disease, Global Data PLC. October 2022. https://www.fightinfectiousdisease.org/files/ugd/b11210_9c84ff00b68a4207894ca41a78ca4a90.pdf?index=true.

⁵ Kuehn BM. Progress Against Antimicrobial Resistance Has Slipped. *JAMA*. 2022;328(8):702. doi:10.1001/jama.2022.14020

The time to address this public health threat is now. Millions of Americans face drug-resistant infections every year. Those living with one or multiple chronic conditions are particularly vulnerable, including nearly 40,000 people with cystic fibrosis who are at particularly high risk for severe infections. If we fail to act rapidly to spur research and development, the economic and societal toll will be substantial.

We, the undersigned, ask you to co-sponsor and pass the PASTEUR Act (S. 2076) this year. Please contact [Beth Nelson](#) of Sen. Young's office for more information or to cosponsor the PASTEUR Act. We thank you for your time and attention and stand ready to support your leadership on this important issue in any way we can.

Sincerely,

American Senior Alliance
Cancer Advocacy Group of Louisiana
Epilepsy Alliance Louisiana
H.E.A.L.S. of the South
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
Louisiana Bio
Louisiana Hemophilia Foundation
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
National Kidney Foundation of Louisiana
Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease
Partnership to Fight Infectious Disease
Pontchartrain Cancer Center
Survivors Cancer Action Network