



One Hundred Thirteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

October 15, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

This country faces numerous biological threats ranging from pandemics, terrorist groups expressing intent to develop and use biological weapons, and the current Ebola crisis. It is vital that our Nation is best prepared for these threats and has a unified response, coordinated by a senior official in the White House. For this reason, I write to urge you to reestablish the position of Special Assistant to the President for Biodefense Policy, a position that existed in both the Clinton and George W. Bush Administrations. The importance of this position has been exacerbated by the current Ebola crisis. However, the biological threats faced by our nation, whether natural or man-made, are longstanding.

A number of experts have discussed the need for this position. At the Committee on Homeland Security's October 10th hearing on the Ebola cases in Dallas, witnesses discussed the need for a specific position to address and lead on biological threats. In his testimony, Dr. Brett Giroir, Chief Executive Officer of the Texas A&M Health Science Center and Director of the Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response, noted that no less than 12 Federal agencies play a role in our Nation's biodefense, but what is "critically lacking is a White House Special Assistant to prepare for and lead such responses."¹ Reestablishing the position, he said, "would restore leadership, accountability and consistent prioritization at the highest level of government."² Experts also discussed the need for this leadership and coordination at a February 2014 hearing on biological threats before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications.

By eliminating this position, a key security expert was removed from your team. I urge you to immediately reinstate this position, filled by a person with extensive medical experience,

¹ *Ebola in the Homeland: The Importance of Effective International, Federal, State, and Local Coordination Before the House Committee on Homeland Security*, 113th Cong. (2014) (written statement of Dr. Brett Giroir, Chief Executive Officer, Texas A&M Health Science Center at 5).

² *Id.* (oral testimony of Dr. Brett Giroir).

to coordinate policy and directives across the Federal Government. This will provide for a better strategic picture of gathering biological threats and a more coordinated response to them at all levels of government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael T. McCaul". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a blue color.

MICHAEL T. MCCAUL
Chairman