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Media Release

Association of Public Health Laboratories Applauds Signing of Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act

Washington—The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) congratulates Senators Chris Dodd (D-CT), Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Hillary Clinton (D-NY), along with Congresswoman Roybal-Allard (D-CA) and Congressman Mike Simpson (R-ID) on the president signing into law their legislation that provides increased parent and health care provider education, improved follow-up care and enables states to improve their newborn screening programs. The Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act of 2007 represents a significant commitment to improving the health of children by assuring that testing will continue to occur with the greatest level of accuracy and that those children with life threatening and debilitating disorders will receive prompt and effective treatment.

“Newborn screening has been a critical activity of the nation’s public health laboratories since it began in 1965,” said Frances Downes, DrPH, President of APHL and director of Michigan’s public health laboratory. “This law will allow public health laboratories to continue to provide the highly-accurate testing results – results that enable health care providers to immediately begin treatments that save and improve the lives of children – as technological advances broaden the number of disorders that can be detected.” Downes continued, “We look forward to working closely with the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a national contingency plan for newborn screening that utilizes the experiences learned after Hurricane Katrina so the nation will be better prepared for the next incident that disrupts newborn screening operations.”

Public health laboratories conduct newborn screening tests on 97 percent of the babies born in the US – tests that have long been recognized as an essential and effective preventive public health service that identifies thousands of babies each year who are born with a genetic or metabolic disorder. Laboratories and parents must be confident that tests results are accurate and that disorders are not missed.

“This is an exciting step forward for the newborn screening community.” said Cheryl Hermerath, chair of the APHL Newborn Screening and Genetics in Public Health Committee. “This legislation acknowledges, and offers the opportunity to advance, the

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continuing efforts of newborn screening programs to provide high quality laboratory, follow up, and educational services for the benefit of infants and their families across the country.”

The Association of Public Health Laboratories works with members to strengthen laboratories serving the public’s health. By promoting effective programs and public policy, APHL strives to provide public health laboratories with the resources to protect the health of US residents and to prevent and control disease globally.

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