Seasonal influenza (flu) has become an expected part of yearly disease response in the US, but occasionally an outbreak of a novel flu virus can spread to become a global pandemic. Public health laboratories — governmental labs at the federal, state, and local levels — are responsible for conducting surveillance and diagnostic testing for seasonal and pandemic flu viruses, providing critical data to inform flu vaccine selection. Funding for seasonal surveillance provides a critical foundation of workforce and infrastructure; without sufficient federal support and funding for seasonal flu, public health labs will never be adequately prepared to respond to unpredictable flu pandemics.

In any given year, flu may cause:

9.2–35.6 MILLION
ILLNESSES

900,000
HOSPITALIZATIONS

80,000
DEATHS

One-time, emergency funding distributed by the federal government, allows public health labs to make great strides in laboratory surveillance and capacity, but these gains erode with relatively stagnant appropriations. Increased annual appropriations for seasonal flu would prevent our public health system from playing “catch-up” during a pandemic.

Flu funding currently supports:

**Continuous Surveillance**
Surveillance tells us where and what flu viruses are circulating, informing clinical treatment and public health interventions.

**Advanced Molecular Detection**
Genetic sequencing allows scientists to identify changes in circulating viruses to detect resistance to treatments and inform next season’s vaccines.

**Informatics**
Electronic data exchanges standardize and automate data sharing between public health labs and CDC.

**The International Reagent Resource**
The IRR provides reagents, tools and other resources, which must be delivered in a timely and reliable manner to adequately study and detect flu viruses.

Increased funding will improve:

**Surge Capacity & Pandemic Preparedness**
Labs are often pushed to the brink during outbreaks due to the increased demand in testing and other lab services.

**Infrastructure & Equipment Maintenance**
Updates, preventive maintenance and inspections are required to ensure the quality and reliability of laboratory equipment and infrastructure systems.

**Workforce Training & Support**
An increase in qualified staff and continual training is necessary to meet surge demands and ensure staff are current with advancing technologies and methods.

**Laboratory Testing Capabilities**
Developments and improvements of laboratory tests are crucial in assessing vaccine effectiveness and detecting antiviral resistance.