

U.S. Rep. Baldwin: House Committee approves CDC funding championed by Baldwin to track Coronavirus variants

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin applauded the inclusion of language from her *Tracking COVID-19 Variants Act* in the budget reconciliation legislation that passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee on Thursday. Baldwin's reform aims to dramatically scale up our nation's efforts to track coronavirus variants.

The Energy and Commerce Committee approved legislation that included \$1.75 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct, expand and improve activities to sequence genomes, identify mutations and survey the circulation and transmission of viruses including SARS-CoV-2. Per the legislation, these dollars could also be used to provide genomic sequencing support to state, local, tribal, or territorial public health departments, expand the understanding of coronavirus variants, and build analytical capacity in health departments across the country.

"Variants represent a growing threat to the health and security of our nation, and right now the U.S. is lagging behind other countries in tracking new and emerging variants of this deadly virus," **said Senator Baldwin.** "The U.S. should be a world leader in this effort, and that means we must invest more funding and resources to allow the CDC to ramp up national sequence-based surveillance and support our public health infrastructure. I'm glad to see this legislation move forward today so we can better identify, survey and understand these variants, and better protect all Americans from this public health crisis."

The U.S. is currently conducting sequence-based surveillance of approximately 0.3 percent of coronavirus cases, lagging far behind other nations. It is critical that the U.S. scale up its efforts to survey at least 15 percent of cases to better grasp new and emerging variants, understand their origins, and develop mitigation strategies. The virus has changed, and will continue to change as more Americans are vaccinated.

President Biden's *American Rescue Plan* includes a focus on identifying and addressing emerging strains of COVID-19, and funding to dramatically increase our country's sequencing, surveillance, and outbreak analytics capacity at the levels demanded by the crisis.

Last week, Senator Baldwin and Representatives Ami Bera, MD (D-CA) and Scott Peters (D-CA) introduced the bicameral [Tracking COVID-19 Variants Act](#) that would provide funding for the CDC to support robust, national sequence-based surveillance that is vital to protecting public health and combatting the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, while preparing for emerging threats.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).