

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Leads legislation to respond to future pandemics

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Thom Tillis (R-NC) introduced the *Disease X Act of 2023* to develop the necessary medical countermeasures (MCMs) to combat future pandemics. The COVID-19 pandemic showed the devastating consequences that deadly infectious disease epidemics can cause and the repercussions of not having the proper countermeasures in place to combat it.

“It’s not a matter of ‘if,’ but rather ‘when’ our country will be grappling with another infectious disease outbreak, and we need to be as best prepared as possible to save lives, our economy, and our way of life,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Regardless of whether the next pandemic is naturally occurring, accidentally released, or deliberately caused, we cannot afford to wait for the next viral threat to arise. That’s why I am joining my Republican and Democratic colleagues to take action to develop new antivirals, vaccines, and diagnostics for unknown threats so we are ready to respond to Disease X.”

“Our nation must be equipped and prepared to effectively respond to the next infectious disease outbreak,” **said Senator Tillis.** “We must learn from the lessons—including failures—in how we prepared and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, and our bipartisan legislation will help us research and develop countermeasures to better prepare for the future.”

Even though deadly infectious disease epidemics can dramatically affect the American public, military personnel, and our economic and national security, there is currently no sustained funding, program, or strategy dedicated to accelerating the development of medical countermeasures for previously identified infectious disease threats with the greatest pandemic potential, referred to as Disease X.

The *Disease X Act of 2023* protects Americans by establishing a Disease X Medical Countermeasures Program at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by:

- Providing funding of \$40 million per year for five years specifically for Disease X MCMs;
- Clarifying the HHS may award contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements, or enter into other transactions, to promote the development of Disease X MCMs;
- Directing BARDA to accelerate and support the advanced research, development, and procurement of countermeasures and products to address Disease X threats; and
- Requiring products developed using funding from the Disease X Program be substantially manufactured in the United States.

“This Act would be a major leap forward in our collective efforts to stay ahead of the ever-evolving threat landscape,” **said Anita Cicero, Deputy Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.** “The Disease X Act of 2023 empowers BARDA to invest in modern technologies that will lead to new vaccines and drugs against pandemic-capable viruses. We commend Senators Baldwin and Tillis for their vision and urge all lawmakers to unite in support of this important bill.”

“Disease X is the culmination of what amounts to a conceptual shift in how the country prepares for infectious disease threats with the aim of enhancing resiliency in a truly proactive manner,” **said Dr. Amesh Adalja, Senior Scholar and Project Director for the [Disease X Medical Countermeasures Program Project](#) at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.**

“We dodged a bullet with the COVID19 pandemic because technology was available to prepare and manufacture vaccines in record time. Without continued support for preparedness, next time we may not be so lucky,” **said Paul V Radspinner, President & CEO of FluGen Inc.** “Senator Baldwin’s bold Disease X Act is exactly the kind of initiative that will make sure we are prepared to address the next pandemic in real time by promoting public-private partnerships before the inevitable happens. FluGen is especially encouraged that the Act focuses on American companies both large and small.”

“This legislation, introduced by U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, improves the potential

for a more robust response to future health crisis' and defends against the United States' reliance on resources and material outside its borders," **Bill Jackson and Attilio DiFiore, Co-Founders of Attwill Medical Solutions/Attwill Vascular Technologies.** "Clearly, this strengthens U.S. domestic assets and our ability to effectively react to any health threat. This bill also secures the ability for small and medium sized companies to develop life-saving therapeutics, which will create a level playing field in innovation for the benefit of the American public. We are proud to endorse the Disease X Act and urge the Senator's colleagues to both co-sponsor and vote for this essential piece of legislation."

The *Disease X Act of 2023* has been supported by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, Biotechnology Innovation Organization, Infectious Diseases Society of America, Dr. Caroline Schuerger, Research Fellow, Georgetown Center for Security and Emerging Technology, Dr. Steph Batalis, Research Fellow, Georgetown Center for Security and Emerging Technology, Ginkgo Bioworks, Institute for Progress (IFP), Big Cities Health Coalition, FluGen Inc., US Biologic, Inc., Vir Biotechnology, The Gerontological Society of America, Helix, New Orleans BioInnovation Center, American Society for Microbiology, The Medical Countermeasures Coalition, 1Day Sooner, and Dr. Gregory D. Koblentz, Director, Biodefense Graduate Program, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University.

A one-pager on the legislation can be found [here](#).

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