

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3534

To strengthen and expand activities related to genomic sequencing of pathogens, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 31, 2022

Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Mr. CASSIDY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To strengthen and expand activities related to genomic sequencing of pathogens, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Tracking Pathogens
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. GENOMIC SEQUENCING.**

7 (a) GUIDANCE SUPPORTING GENOMIC SEQUENCING
8 OF PATHOGENS COLLABORATION.—The Secretary of
9 Health and Human Services (referred to in this section
10 as the “Secretary”), acting through the Director of the

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and in con-
2 sultation with the heads of other agencies and depart-
3 ments, as appropriate, shall issue guidance to support col-
4 laboration relating to genomic sequencing of pathogens,
5 including the use of new and innovative approaches and
6 technology for the detection, characterization, and se-
7 quencing of pathogens, to improve public health surveil-
8 lance and preparedness and response activities, consistent
9 with section 2824 of the Public Health Service Act, as
10 added by subsection (b). Such guidance shall address the
11 sharing, for public health surveillance purposes, of speci-
12 mens of such pathogens, between appropriate entities and
13 public health authorities pursuant to the regulations pro-
14 mulgated under section 264(c) of the Health Insurance
15 Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (42 U.S.C.
16 1320d–2 note), in a manner that protects personal privacy
17 to the extent required by applicable Federal and State pri-
18 vacy law, at a minimum, and the appropriate use of se-
19 quence data derived from such specimens.

20 (b) GENOMIC SEQUENCING PROGRAM.—Title
21 XXVIII of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.
22 300hh et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
23 lowing:

1 **“SEC. 2824. GENOMIC SEQUENCING, ANALYTICS, AND PUB-**
2 **LIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE OF PATHOGENS**
3 **PROGRAM.**

4 “(a) GENOMIC SEQUENCING, ANALYTICS, AND PUB-
5 LIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE OF PATHOGENS PRO-
6 GRAM.—The Secretary, acting through the Director of the
7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and in con-
8 sultation with the Director of the National Institutes of
9 Health and heads of other departments and agencies, as
10 appropriate, shall strengthen and expand activities related
11 to genomic sequencing of pathogens, including new and
12 innovative approaches and technology for the detection,
13 characterization, and sequencing of pathogens, analytics,
14 and public health surveillance, including—

15 “(1) continuing and expanding activities, which
16 may include existing genomic sequencing activities
17 related to advanced molecular detection, to—

18 “(A) identify and respond to emerging in-
19 fectious disease threats; and

20 “(B) identify the potential use of genomic
21 sequencing technologies, advanced computing,
22 and other advanced technology, including strat-
23 egies for environmental sampling, to inform
24 surveillance activities and incorporate the use of
25 such technologies, as appropriate, into related
26 activities;

1 “(2) providing technical assistance and guid-
2 ance to State, Tribal, local, and territorial public
3 health departments to increase the capacity of such
4 departments to perform genomic sequencing of
5 pathogens, including recipients of funding under sec-
6 tion 2821;

7 “(3) carrying out activities to enhance the capa-
8 bilities of the public health workforce with respect to
9 pathogen genomics, epidemiology, and
10 bioinformatics, including through training; and

11 “(4) continuing and expanding activities, as ap-
12 plicable, with public and private entities, including
13 relevant departments and agencies, laboratories, aca-
14 demic institutions, and industry.

15 “(b) PARTNERSHIPS.—For the purposes of carrying
16 out the activities described in subsection (a), the Sec-
17 retary, acting through the Director of the Centers for Dis-
18 ease Control and Prevention, may award grants, contracts,
19 or cooperative agreements to academic and other labora-
20 tories with expertise in genomic sequencing for public
21 health purposes, including new and innovative approaches
22 to, and related technology for, the detection, characteriza-
23 tion, and sequencing of pathogens.

24 “(c) CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting
2 through the Director of the Centers for Disease
3 Control and Prevention, shall, as appropriate, award
4 grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements to pub-
5 lic health agencies or public health agency partner-
6 ships for the establishment or operation of centers of
7 excellence to promote innovation in pathogen
8 genomics and molecular epidemiology to improve the
9 control of and response to pathogens that may cause
10 a public health emergency. Such centers shall, as ap-
11 propriate—

12 “(A) identify and evaluate the use of
13 genomics, or other related technologies that
14 may advance public health preparedness and re-
15 sponse;

16 “(B) improve the identification, develop-
17 ment, and use of tools for integrating and ana-
18 lyzing genomic and epidemiologic data;

19 “(C) assist with genomic surveillance of,
20 and response to, infectious diseases, including
21 analysis of pathogen genomic data;

22 “(D) conduct applied research to improve
23 public health surveillance of, and response to,
24 infectious diseases through innovation in patho-
25 gen genomics and molecular epidemiology;

1 “(E) develop and provide training mate-
2 rials for experts in the fields of genomics,
3 microbiology, bioinformatics, epidemiology, and
4 other fields, as appropriate; and

5 “(F) conduct workforce development
6 through advanced training in academic labora-
7 tories.

8 “(2) REQUIREMENTS.—To be eligible for an
9 award under paragraph (1), an entity shall submit
10 to the Secretary an application containing such in-
11 formation as the Secretary may require, including a
12 description of how the entity will partner, as applica-
13 ble, with academic institutions or a consortium of
14 academic partners that have relevant expertise, such
15 as microbial genomics, molecular epidemiology, or
16 the application of bioinformatics or statistics.

17 “(d) AUTHORIZATION.—For purposes of carrying out
18 this section, there are authorized to be appropriated
19 \$175,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023 through
20 2027.”.

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