

# **Saving Lives Through Better Data Act**

*Introduced by Senators Kaine, Isakson, and King*

The nation's public health system needs high quality, timely, and accurate data to protect the public from health threats like opioid overdoses, influenza, measles, and more. Effective prevention and response to health threats requires coordinated efforts between health care providers and public health officials across all levels of government.

Unfortunately, the public health data systems we rely on for our health and safety are antiquated and fragmented. Systems lack the interoperability needed to facilitate timely, secure information exchange. Too often, public health departments are forced to rely on systems with manual processes that are time consuming and error prone, such as paper records, faxes, and phone calls. Only two jurisdictions have begun the process to receive electronic case reports directly from health records, and only for a small number of diseases. Our public health data infrastructure lacks the automation, security, interoperability, and skilled workforce we need to confront the public health threats of today and tomorrow.

The Saving Lives Through Better Data Act will help build the 21<sup>st</sup> Century public health data infrastructure by:

- Awarding grants to state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments to improve data collection and analysis, simplify provider reporting, enhance interoperability, promote electronic case reporting, and support earlier disease detection and response.
- Ensuring that grant recipients support interoperability standards endorsed by the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology or those adopted by the HHS Secretary.
- Requiring CDC to conduct activities to improve public health data systems and leverage public-private partnerships to support the expansion and modernization of electronic case reporting and public health data systems.
- Developing a strategy and implementation plan to update and improve CDC's public health data systems and support the improvement of state, local, tribal, and territorial public health data systems.
- Reporting on barriers public health authorities may face in implementing electronic case reporting or making their systems more interoperable and the public health impact of making those improvements.
- Making the necessary investment to improve health data systems by authorizing \$100 million for each of fiscal years 2020 through 2024.

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