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Fund the Bio Preparedness Workforce Act in FY 2024

Congress must fund the BIO Preparedness Workforce Act \$50 million for FY 2024 to better prepare for future pandemics.

Workforce gaps existed prior to COVID-19.

Prior to COVID-19, a survey of infection preventionists found 25% of departments were reporting at least one vacancy. The report noted that open positions can take between 3-6 months to fill.¹ During COVID-19, many infection preventionists left due to exhaustion or to pursue other professions.

A wave of retirements is coming.

There are concerns about the number of infection preventionists that will retire in the near future. A recent study showed, 40% of the IP workforce will enter retirement age within the next ten years.²

Student loan burdens are a challenge for infection preventionists entering the field.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the role, many infection preventionists have multiple degrees (nursing, microbiology, MPH etc.). According to an American Association of Colleges of Nursing student loan survey, debt loads for graduate nursing students range from \$40,000 and \$54,999.³ Infection preventionists are increasingly receiving their Masters in Public Health in addition to their nursing degrees or post-baccalaureate degree. According to a National Center for Education Statistics study, the estimated debt load from just this degree is up to \$75,000.⁴

Loan reimbursement will incentivize the infectious diseases workforce.

As we work to build the Infection Prevention workforce for the future, it will be crucial to retain the current workforce. When infection preventionists were asked what could improve retention, continuing education support and tuition reimbursement were two of the highest rated incentives. In long-term care settings, professional development was also highly rated.

¹ Gilmartin, Heather et al. Recruitment and hiring practices in United States infection prevention and control departments: Results of a national survey. *American Journal of Infection Control*, Volume 49, Issue 1, 70 - 74.

² Gilmartin H, Smathers S, Reese SM. Infection preventionist retention and professional development strategies: insights from a national survey. *Am J Infect Control*. Published online May 4, 2021. doi:10.1016/j.ajic.2021.04.083.

³ American Association of Colleges of Nursing. *AACN's 2017 Graduate Nursing Student Loan Survey*. <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/Policy/PDF/2016-Student-Debt-Glance.pdf>.

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education 2018*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_tub.pdf.