



May 24, 2013

John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH, Secretary of Health  
Office of the Secretary  
Washington State Department of Health  
PO Box 47890  
Olympia, WA 98504-7890

Dear Secretary Wiesman:

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Secretary of Health for Washington state. We are writing to express our concerns about the potential closure of the Spokane Regional Health District Bio-Terrorism Lab in Eastern Washington.

Spokane Regional Health District has seen its outside funding dwindle over the past 10 years, and additional cuts will likely render it to close in 2013 if additional funding is not found. It is the only lab east of the cascades that is certified to receive and test bioterrorism agents. Its closure would result in delays in identifying substances in the event of a bioterrorism threat, or force our state to rely on neighboring states for this analysis.

Last week, letters laced with ricin were addressed to a federal judge and the downtown post office in Spokane. The letters were intercepted and transported to the Bio-Terrorism Lab. The lab was able to receive, test and confirm preliminary traces of ricin within just a few hours, allowing law enforcement to begin a timely investigation. Additionally, local public health officials were immediately able to contact those that had handled the letters to assess their individual risk. If the lab had been closed, the samples would have had to be driven to Shoreline for preliminary testing. Also, it is unclear whether local public health staff would have been notified to assist those that had handled the material.

This incident highlights how critical it is that we retain this capacity in eastern Washington. We understand that you are facing cuts in federal emergency preparedness funding; however, closing this facility is not the solution.



Secretary John Wiesman  
Page 2  
May 24, 2013

Now is the time to build, or at least sustain, our emergency preparedness assets east of the Cascades. We should not diminish or abolish them.

Sincerely,



Representative Marcus Riccelli  
3<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District



Senator Andy Billig  
3<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District



Representative Timm Ormsby  
3<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District



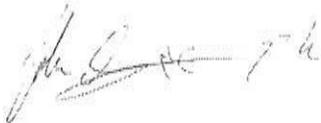
Senator Michael Baumgartner  
6<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Senator Michael Padden  
4<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Representative Larry Crouse  
4<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Senator John Smith  
7<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Representative Kevin Parker  
6<sup>th</sup> Legislative District