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## **Kennedy, Snowe & Slaughter Introduce AMA-backed Bill to Cut Antibiotic Resistance Linked to Misuse of Antibiotics in Animal Agriculture**

Washington, DC – The Keep Antibiotics Working Coalition today praised the introduction of a bill backed by numerous medical groups that would combat the antibiotic resistance crisis by phasing out the non-therapeutic use in animal agriculture of antibiotics that are important in human medicine. The legislation was introduced in the Senate (S. 549) today by Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Jack Reed (D-RI). It was introduced in the House of Representatives (H.R. 962) on Thursday by Rules Committee Chairwoman Louise Slaughter (D-NY), the only microbiologist in Congress.

The American Medical Association, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, and the American Academy of Pediatrics are among the more than 350 health, agriculture and other groups nationwide that have endorsed the bill, “The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act.” The U.S. Institute of Medicine has concluded that: “Clearly, a decrease in the inappropriate use of antimicrobials [antibiotics and related drugs] in human medicine alone is not enough. Substantial efforts must be made to decrease inappropriate overuse of antimicrobials in animals and agriculture as well.”

“We need to take every possible step to save our dwindling supply of lifesaving antibiotics currently – there have only been a handful of new classes of antibiotics in the last quarter century,” said Dr. David Wallinga, director of the Food and Health Program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minnesota and a co-author of a recent NIH-published report about how the routine use of antibiotics in livestock production contributes to the rise of antibiotic-resistant germs in human medicine. “We commend Senators Kennedy and Snowe and Representative Slaughter for their leadership.”

The bill would phase out within two years the use as animal feed additives of antibiotics that are also important in human medicine, such as penicillin, because this practice spurs the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that is transferred to humans via our food, air and water. Antibiotic feed additives are used without a prescription to promote slightly faster growth and to compensate for crowded, stressful, and often unsanitary conditions on industrial-scale farms. The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that 70% of all the antibiotics used in the United States are used as feed additives for chicken, hogs, and beef cattle.

The bill also requires the pharmaceutical companies making agricultural antibiotics to submit data on the quantity of drugs they sell, along with information on the claimed purpose and the dosage form of those drugs, to help public health officials track the implementation of the phase-out.

The bill leaves farmers with many options including other antibiotics not used in human medicine, as well as improved animal husbandry practices such as those utilized in Europe and on some U.S. farms. The Senate bill also authorizes funds to farmers to help defray costs of phasing out non-therapeutic use of medically important antibiotics, and provides for research and demonstration projects to assist farmers in this transition.

“Europe already has banned the use of growth-promoting antibiotics. In Denmark, where the effects of the ban have been rigorously studied, there have been no significant adverse effects on farmers, on animals or on consumers,” said Rebecca Goldberg, Ph.D., a senior scientist for Environmental Defense, a member of the Keep Antibiotics Working Coalition. “There’s no reason the most efficient farming system in the world here in the United States can’t achieve the same success.”