

The BioShield Program was created to develop and procure medical countermeasures against dangerous chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) agents. The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for determining threats posed to our country by these agents, and for taking specific steps to protect the nation's citizens from these harms. While I fully support the mission of BioShield, the program has encountered several problems since it was enacted nearly three years ago.

One major shortcoming of the program is a lack of efficiency in the assessment of threats. Rather than examining each threat individually, we should be looking for ways to properly group these threats together, so we can develop appropriate countermeasures to combat multiple threats. My colleagues and I are introducing this legislation to improve and expedite the Department's conduct of Material Threat Determinations (MTD) and the more in-depth Material Threat Assessments (MTA). These MTDs and MTAs will promote a more strategic use of our Nation's resources when procuring medical countermeasures and will ultimately lead to a safer and better-prepared public health infrastructure.

To date, DHS has completed fifteen MTDs. It took well over one year to complete the first six, but the pace picked up considerably since a shift towards less in-depth risk assessments of twenty-nine top threat agents listed by the Centers for Disease Control. The Department leveraged those risk assessments to more quickly complete the next round of MTDs. Soon the Department plans another round of risk assessments that will include more chemical agents. I hope this bill sends a clear message to the Department that we in Congress want to support and improve upon their recent efforts.

Risk is assessed based on a combination of threat, vulnerability, and consequences, and we should encourage the Department to use threat information contained in existing risk assessments to inform and expedite the MTD/MTA process. This bill promotes the use of existing risk assessments if those assessments are considered credible by the Secretary.

Another way to both accelerate and leverage assessments is to conduct them in groups, either by the physical or genetic similarity of the agents themselves or the symptoms they cause. Countermeasures that address more than one threat agent are commonly referred to as "broad spectrum medical countermeasures," and these should be the gold standard for efficient use of BioShield resources. We must move beyond the current "One Bug, One Drug" approach we currently use to the "One Drug for Many Bugs" model that broad spectrum countermeasures offer.

Finally, we all know that time is of the essence as we work to address those agents we already know and ensure we are prepared for emerging threats. The legislation I am introducing today requires all MTDs for CBRN agents that the Secretary determines to be capable of significantly affecting national security to be completed by December 31, 2007.

Madam Speaker, this bill will aid the Department of Homeland Security in conducting threat and risk assessments, which is the first step to countermeasure procurement. We must address those agents—known and emerging, natural or engineered—that present

the highest risk to our citizens, and we must do it quickly. Passage of this measure will help advance and improve that process, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

A TRIBUTE TO THE BIRTH, LIFE,
AND LEGACY OF BOB MARLEY

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 62nd anniversary of the birth, life and legacy of renowned musician, champion of peace, and provocateur of thought; Bob Marley. His music stirred emotions of love; his life inspired the hope of peace. February 6, 1945 marked the beginning of his journey as an ambassador of humanity. Bob Marley was with us such a short time, but left such a rich legacy that on each birthday we ask ourselves what greatness we would have seen if he had lived a full life. We are sad that he died so young and that after all these years he would have just turned 62 this month.

Bob Marley's international appeal is due to his commitment to the unity of mankind. He awakened the consciousness of society as a spokesperson for equality in Africa and for the poor and underprivileged across the world. His efforts to shine a light on the darkest regions across the globe gave a platform to the voiceless to let their stories be heard. Bob Marley was an activist of world peace, and he encouraged us that if we come together "we can make it work."

Bob Marley's ability to empathize with the plight of the poor and destitute is a characteristic that we all must internalize. When we are faced with the widening gap of the haves and have-nots, with our neighbors affected by Hurricane Katrina, and with the citizens of Haiti and Darfur, we must have the compassion and the courage to ensure that all are given the opportunity to live fulfilling lives.

With the revolutionary spirit of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Bob Marley empowered us to realize our inner strength and to continually strive for spiritual maturity. His famous lyrics in "Redemption Song" gave insight in overcoming inner dissonance, advising to "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds." His conviction to personal growth was seen in his commitment to the principles of his faith, and his unyielding desire for others to become fully actualized human beings.

Having a special talent to recreate the scenes of everyday life, Bob Marley gave us the opportunity to experience the joy, love, pain, and redemption that characterize our humanity through his music. With a message which transcends the reality of which he sung, he speaks to us in this day and time as meaningfully as he did when he lived, leading us to reflect on the complexities of our world, and the enjoyment of the pleasures in our lives.

His numerous awards and accolades reflect his dedication to creating music and a message unhindered by culture, race, time, or space. He and his beloved anthem "One Love" was voted as the most popular international song of the 20th century. Bob Marley's music lives on to remind us to strive

for peace in our society and within ourselves. Because of his contribution to the world of music and the consciousness of humanity, I celebrate the birth, life, and legend of Bob Marley.

INTRODUCING THE FOSTER
CHILDREN SELF SUPPORT ACT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2007

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the "Foster Children Self Support Act." This bill will codify into federal law what should be common sense: abused and neglected children should not be used as a funding stream for states that should be acting in the best interests of these extremely vulnerable children.

In nearly every state in the country, foster children eligible for Social Security benefits because of a disability or the loss of a parent are having those benefits taken by the very state agencies charged with providing for them. The "Foster Children Self Support Act" would end that practice. Instead, it would require states to use a child's Social Security benefits to meet the immediate needs of that child or set aside those benefits to assist the child with transitioning to adulthood when that child emancipates from care.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) estimates that approximately 30,000 foster children (out of 500,000 nationwide) receive either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or OASDI (Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance) benefits each month. Unfortunately, hardly any of these children will benefit from these funds. Nor will the children have the option to save the money as a nest egg for when they leave care. This is because state child welfare agencies routinely make themselves the representative payee so that they have control over the child's benefits. Often, neither the child nor the child's advocate knows that Social Security benefits are being sent to the agency. Once the welfare agency controls the benefits they are free to use them however they please.

In this manner, state welfare agencies take an estimated \$156 million per year from foster children. The practice has devastating consequences, as evidenced by the case of "John G.," a foster child in North Carolina. John was willed a house when his adoptive father died of cancer. The house had a \$221 monthly mortgage. Luckily for John he was entitled to approximately \$560 in Social Security OASDI benefits. However, the child welfare agency, who had made themselves John's representative payee, decided they would rather keep the money than ensure John had a place to live when he left foster care. Just as his house was about to be foreclosed on, John went to court. Currently, the welfare agency is making the payments under a court order. The future of John's house is still very much in doubt because the agency has appealed and the law may not be on John's side.

Although John G.'s case is particularly egregious, all foster children and former foster children face tremendous challenges. Foster children often enter care having suffered from serious emotional, mental, and/or physical