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JANICE K. BREWER, GOVERNOR
WILL HUMBLE, INTERIM DIRECTOR

February 12, 2010

The Honorable Gabrielle Giffords
United States House of Representatives
1728 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Giffords:

I write in very strong support of "Antivenom for America," a federal initiative submitted by the University of Arizona for FY11. Dr. Boyer's concept of extending the VIPER antivenom program nationwide is brilliant, very cost-effective for the country as a whole, and likely to save lives in the southeast the way that the VIPER Institute currently does in Arizona. The global antivenom shortage hit Arizona ten years before it hit the rest of the country, because of our natural ecology; but this means that we can provide national leadership as more states become affected.

As Director of the Arizona Department of Health Services, I am well familiar with the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center and with VIPER, both of which have for years received state funds through agreements with ADHS. As you know, the poison center has been based at the UA for over 50 years, and its pharmacists and physicians help train the next generation of healthcare providers for Arizona while providing the 24/7 emergency service on which the state depends. VIPER provides all of the scorpion antivenom used in Arizona, through a unique and very successful program of cooperation among ADHS, the poison center, the UA and hospitals across the state. Through the two centers, UA faculty help over 70,000 Arizonans per year. VIPER has provided emergency antivenom to about 1200 Arizonans, most of them critically ill small children, since the program began.

Unfortunately, during the recent economic crisis, ADHS has had to reduce funding to all programs paid out of the State general fund, including the poison center and VIPER. For the poison center, this has to date meant a reduction of over \$600,000 in annual support, and depending on the outcome of the upcoming legislative session it could get worse. I would hate for Arizona to lose such a vital program; and I have encouraged Drs. Boyer and Boesen to diversify the center's mission in order to prevent loss of highly trained personnel during what we all hope will be a temporary situation. Antivenom for America, in addition to creating a new national program, appears to be a perfect match for the skills and abilities of poison center professionals. Federal funding for this program could be the key to maintaining basic poison control services in Arizona.

I urge you to make every effort to secure funding for Antivenom for America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Humble". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Will Humble
Director