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Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Preparedness & Response
Washington, D.C. 20201

Patricia Quinlisk, M.D., M.P.H.
Chair, National Biodefense Science Board
State Epidemiologist and Medical Director
Iowa Department of Public Health
321 East 12th Street
Lucas State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319-0075

Dear Dr. Quinlisk and Members of the National Biodefense Science Board:

I have reviewed the National Biodefense Science Board's (NBSB) disaster mental health recommendations and want to commend the Board and the Disaster Mental Health (DMH) Subcommittee for this excellent and thoughtful work.

The NBSB and DMH Subcommittee have clearly fulfilled their original mandate, as established by the requirements of Homeland Security Presidential Directive-21, regarding recommendations for protecting, preserving, and restoring individual and community mental health in catastrophic health event settings. Nevertheless, I know that mental health is a critical component to emergency preparedness and response. It is my intention to maintain a focus on the emotional and behavioral aspects of the work we do here at the Department of Health and Human Services.

To accomplish this objective I would like the NBSB to continue to rely on the expertise and experience of the members of the DMH Subcommittee in two primary ways. First, I would like the NBSB to utilize members of the subcommittee to act as an *ad hoc* body of experts that could be called on during events of significance. In that role, the Board would request guidance and recommendations from the Subcommittee or subset of the Subcommittee—depending on the exact nature of the event and subject matter expertise required—to respond to specific questions or issues. The NBSB would deliberate on the guidance and recommendations. Second, I would like the NBSB to convene the DMH Subcommittee in the next fiscal year to assess the Department's progress in its efforts to better integrate behavioral health into emergency preparedness and response activities. As the foremost experts on emerging science and practice innovations, I consider the members of the NBSB and the DMH Subcommittee essential informants who can assist the Department in continuing to improve and advance empirically based approaches to disaster mental health and community resilience.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the invited experts and ex-officio members of the NBSB DMH Subcommittee for their continued dedication and effort. I look forward to the future contributions of the Board and the Subcommittee to our mission of ensuring the health and safety of the American people as they face the challenges presented by natural and manmade emergency and public health events.

Sincerely,
/s/

Nicole Lurie, MD, MSPH
Assistant Secretary for Preparedness & Response