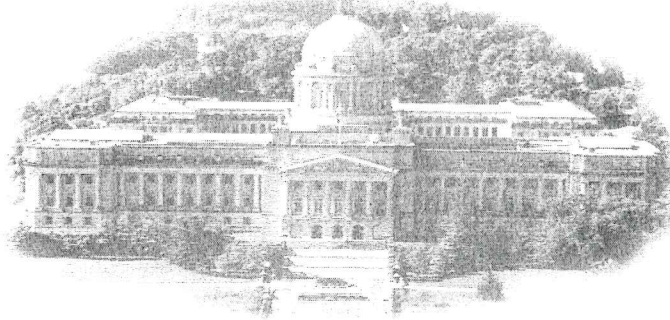


Kentucky General Assembly

House of Representatives

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April 5, 2013

The Honorable Steve Beshear
Governor of Kentucky
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Dear Governor Beshear:

I am writing in regards to the March 24, 2013, article in the Courier Journal regarding the deadly bacteria carbapenem-resistant enterobacteriaceae (CRE) and to request amending 902 KAR 2:020 (Disease Surveillance) to include CRE, (infection or asymptomatic carrier state), and to require urgent notification under Section 2 of this regulation. CRE represents a large group of gram-negative bacteria, which can spread bacterial resistance between each other.

CRE is a deadly, potentially untreatable, bacterial infection, which can be spread on contact, and when it is in the blood, it has almost a 50 percent fatality rate. Colistin, the only antibiotic that has some activity against CRE, is toxic and causes renal failure in a significant number of patients.

As reported in the Courier Journal article, approximately 20 cases have been treated in the Louisville Hospitals over the past two years. However, the Kentucky Department of Health has received only one report of an outbreak.

Most disturbing is that the 13 cases treated by Norton Healthcare System, appear to be increasing in frequency and came from nursing homes. Dr. Paul Schulz, Norton System Epidemiologist, has described this as a community problem.

It is imperative that CRE does not get into the community and become as prevalent as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA). Each of the cases treated by Norton Healthcare should have been investigated to determine the source in the Nursing Homes and to make sure the cause of the disease has been eradicated.

April 5, 2013

Page 2

As a testament to the threat imposed by CRE, enclosed is a copy of an e-mail message from Dr. Denise M. Cardo, Acting Deputy Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office of Science, Epidemiology and Laboratory Services (OSELS); to Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, stressing her concerns regarding this epidemic and for "healthcare administrators and providers to take immediate steps to ensure that CDC infection prevention measures are aggressively implemented in an effort to protect patients and stop the spread of these organisms."

In addition, Dr. Cardo stated that at least six states have moved forward making CRE a reportable disease with others putting steps in place to enact mandatory reporting. I have enclosed the 2013 Reportable Diseases and Events list of organisms required to be reported by the State of Tennessee; CRE is included in this list. In Kentucky many bacteria, which are more treatable than CRE, are required to be reported (see enclosure: 902 KAR 2:020).

KRS 211.180 requires the Cabinet to implement a statewide program for the detection, prevention, and control of communicable diseases. I would like to request that you implement this authority by making carbapenem-resistant enterobacteriaceae (CRE) disease a mandatory reportable event in the State of Kentucky.

In addition, I request that all carbapenem resistant gram-negative bacteria, including *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Acinetobacter* species also be made mandatory reportable bacteria, requiring priority notification under Section 3 of 902 KAR 2:020.

Since patients are currently being transferred between institutions with CRE, health department engagement is required to fully investigate the source, prevent these potentially deadly bacteria from developing a foothold in Kentucky, placing our population at risk.

It should be obvious to you that I had some technical help drafting this letter, but I feel that the issue is very important to the health and welfare of the Commonwealth. Dr. Kevin Kavanagh provided the technical assistance that I needed to compose this letter.

Your consideration of this request is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Burch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Tom Burch
State Representative

TB/KK/gm
Enclosures