

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor and Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor and Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

As the Senate undertakes the next iteration of legislation to speed the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the undersigned organizations urge you to include a significant, long-term investment in public health infrastructure to prepare for the next pandemic and avoid the loss of life and social and economic disruption we are facing today. By building the core public health infrastructure of states, localities, tribal governments and territories, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the nation will be better prepared for the next threat.

**Our groups recommend \$4.5 billion in additional annual funding for CDC, state, local, tribal and territorial core public health infrastructure to pay for such essential activities as disease surveillance, epidemiology, laboratory capacity, all-hazards preparedness and response; policy development and support; communications; community partnership development; and organizational competencies.**

For too long, the nation has neglected basic public health capacity. More than 56,000 local public health jobs were eliminated between 2008 and 2017.<sup>1</sup> Health departments are still dependent on archaic methods of tracking diseases, including phone, fax and paper.<sup>2</sup> CDC's funding remains just above level with FY2008, when adjusting for inflation,<sup>3</sup> and funding specific to state and local public health preparedness has been cut from \$939 million in FY2003 to \$675 million in

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<sup>1</sup> New Workforce Survey: Public Health Turnover Could Pose Threat to Community Health. de Beaumont Foundation, 2019.

<https://www.debeaumont.org/news/2019/new-workforce-survey-public-health-turnover-could-pose-threat-to-community-health/>

<sup>2</sup> Written statement of Janet Hamilton, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists before U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, April 9, 2019. [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cste.org/resource/resmgr/pdfs/pdfs2/20190409\\_lhhs-testimony-jjh.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cste.org/resource/resmgr/pdfs/pdfs2/20190409_lhhs-testimony-jjh.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> In FY 2008, CDC funding was \$6.375 billion (at the program level). FY 2020 funding is \$7.694 billion (program level). Adjusted for inflation, the 2008 number would be \$7.5168 billion in 2020 dollars.

FY2020. That means there has been little room to modernize, retain skilled workforce, and address emerging threats. In fact, only 51 percent of the U.S. population is served by a comprehensive public health system, and the estimated gap in funding foundational public health capabilities is about \$13 per person per year, yielding the requested \$4.5 billion.<sup>4</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic is illustrating in the direst terms the consequences of underfunding public health. The delays in diagnostic testing are hampering communities' ability to suppress the virus. Public health departments are attempting to conduct statewide situational awareness and management of medical supply shortages. The response is personnel-heavy – investigating cases, managing supplies and volunteers, conducting risk communications, coordinating with governmental and healthcare partners, and planning for the next phase of response.

The U.S. has followed a pattern of underfunding of vital public health services, followed by a crisis, a quick infusion of cash, and then dwindling investments over time.<sup>5</sup> This pattern is placing American lives at risk. We must think not just of the short-term needs of this pandemic, but the long-term readiness of our nation. We applaud Congress for taking quick action to provide \$8.3 billion for the initial response, which included \$950 million for the state and local public health response. However, short-term, supplemental funding does not allow public health to recruit and retain the expert workforce needed for protecting the nation against emerging threats. We urge you to do act now to prevent and prepare for the next pandemic.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days

317 Coalition

Advocates for Youth

African American Health Alliance

AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families

The AIDS Institute

AIDS United

Alliance for Aging Research

Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's Impact Movement

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

American Association on Health and Disability

American College of Clinical Pharmacy

American College of Preventive Medicine

American Dental Hygienists' Association

American Diabetes Association

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

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<sup>4</sup> Public Health Leadership Forum. Developing a financing system to support public health infrastructure. Available at: [http://www.resolv.org/site-healthleadershipforum/files/2018/11/PHLF\\_developingafinancingsystemtosupportpublichealth.pdf](http://www.resolv.org/site-healthleadershipforum/files/2018/11/PHLF_developingafinancingsystemtosupportpublichealth.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> The Impact of Chronic Underfunding of America's Public Health System: Trends, Risks, and Recommendations, 2019. Trust for America's Health. <https://www.tfah.org/report-details/2019-funding-report/>

American Geophysical Union  
American Lung Association  
American Mosquito Control Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Sexual Health Association  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene  
American Thoracic Society  
Americas TB Coalition  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association of American Cancer Institutes  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Biophysical Society  
Bipartisan Policy Center Action  
CAEAR Coalition  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
CDC Southeastern Center of Excellence in Vector Borne Diseases  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Delta Vector Control District  
Endocrine Society  
Entomological Society of America  
Epilepsy Foundation  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality  
Global Health Security Roundtable  
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative  
Healthy Teen Network  
Human Rights Campaign  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Los Angeles LGBT Center  
March of Dimes  
NAACP  
NACDD  
National Alliance of State and Territorial of AIDS Directors (NASTAD)  
National Association for Biomedical Research  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Coalition of STD Directors

National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National League of Cities  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National Tuberculosis Controllers Association  
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable  
National WIC Association  
New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute  
NMAC  
Novavax  
Peggy Lillis Foundation  
PFLAG National  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevention Institute  
Project HOPE  
Public Health Accreditation Board  
Public Health Institute  
Research!America  
Safe States Alliance  
Seqirus  
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change  
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America  
Society for Vector Ecology  
Spina Bifida Association  
Stop TB USA  
Treatment Action Group  
Trust for America's Health  
USA Patient Network  
Vaccinate Your Family  
YMCA of the USA