June 18, 2018

Dear Senator Rubio and Chairman Hatch:

As organizations committed to improving the public’s health, we are writing to express our opposition to using the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund) to offset projected spending in the Puerto Rico Economic Empowerment Act. While we wholeheartedly recognize and support the goal of providing economic support to Puerto Rico in the aftermath of several public health disasters, we believe it would be harmful to cut critical public health funding to do so.

As Puerto Rico, Florida, and other parts of the country have responded to recent natural disasters, the Zika outbreak, and other public health threats, the Prevention Fund has been a critical source of funding for state, local, territorial, and tribal public health departments and others at the community level. In fact, two thirds of the Prevention Fund goes to those jurisdictions. Today, the Prevention Fund comprises 12 percent of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) budget. CDC initiatives supported by the Prevention Fund are core public health activities such as sustaining the public health laboratories that investigate infectious disease outbreaks like Zika and Ebola; supporting childhood immunizations; and providing services to older adults at risk of developing diabetes and other preventable chronic diseases. Florida, Utah, and Puerto Rico alone have received over $188 million from the Prevention Fund for such activities. It is no exaggeration to state that the health of the residents in communities throughout the nation would be negatively affected by the proposed redirection of the funding.

Congress has already tapped the Prevention Fund for purposes unintended under the original authorization. While the original authorizing language designated as much as $2 billion a year in new investments to modernize our prevention and public health efforts, as a result of previous legislative actions, less than half of that is available in the current fiscal year.

As a result of these decisions, public health spending is still below pre-recession levels, having remained relatively flat for years. Each year, even with passage of the FY 2018 Omnibus Spending Act, which added significant new funding, the Prevention Fund has helped to offset or prevent more serious cuts to the CDC budget – and ultimately to budgets at the state, territorial and local levels - due to the spending caps. The future scheduled growth of the Prevention Fund
will allow public health to make up some of this lost ground and increase investments in innovative programs aimed at better preparing the nation for future health challenges.

Reducing our nation’s ability to prevent illness and injury will likely cause children and families to become sicker and our nation’s health care costs to grow even faster. We will be more successful in our efforts to control the rising costs of health care if we invest in keeping Americans healthy in the first place. We urge you to remove this provision from the Puerto Rico Economic Empowerment Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days
A World Fit For Kids!
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Advocates for Better Children's Diets
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association for Dental Research
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Council on Exercise
American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
The Arizona Partnership for Immunization
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health

California Public Health Association-North
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
ChangeLab Solutions
Coalition for Health Funding
Community Activist
The Consortium
Cooley's Anemia Foundation
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families
Endocrine Society
Every Child By Two
Health Resources in Action
HealthBEX, LLC
Healthcare Ready
HIV Medicine Association
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Immunize Nevada
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Iowa Public Health Association
Kent State University
Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center
Louisiana Public Health Institute
March of Dimes
MaryCatherine Jones Consulting, LLC
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association for Health and Fitness
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of Counties
National Coalition on Health Care
National WIC Association
Prevent Blindness
The Prevent Cancer Foundation
Prevention Institute
Public Health Foundation
Public Health Institute
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Safe Kids Oakland County
Safe Kids Worldwide
Safe States Alliance
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Society for Public Health Education
Specialty Pharmacy
Spina Bifida Association
Trust for America's Health
Washington State Department of Health
WelCore Health, LLC
West Valley Neighborhoods Coalition