

April 3, 2020

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

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leaders Schumer and McCarthy:

As Congress 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. This investment is critical to support the public health system as it rebuilds from the COVID-19 response, but also to strengthen it before the next pandemic hits and avoid the loss of life and social and economic disruption we are facing today. The importance of strong, predictable federal investment in this system is even more vital now as the economic impacts of the pandemic are felt nationwide. State and local governmental budgets, and therefore public health budgets, are likely to be devastated. This will leave our nation even more vulnerable to emerging health risks. 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—nearly one quarter of the workforce.<sup>1</sup> Health departments are still dependent on archaic methods of tracking diseases, including phone,

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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/>

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 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 Better Children's Diets  
Advocates for Youth  
African American Health Alliance  
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families  
The AIDS Institute  
AIDS United

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<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.

<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/>

Alliance for Aging Research  
Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's Impact Movement  
Alzheimer's Los Angeles  
Alzheimer's San Diego  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Clinical Chemistry  
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Clinical Laboratory Association  
American College of Clinical Pharmacy  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American Dental Education Association  
American Dental Hygienists' Association  
American Diabetes Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Geophysical Union  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Heart Association  
American Immunization Registry Association  
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering  
American Lung Association  
American Mosquito Control Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American Podiatric Medical Association  
American Public Health Association  
American School Health Association  
American Sexual Health Association  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
American Society of Transplantation  
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene  
American Therapeutic Recreation Association  
American Thoracic Society  
America's Blood Centers  
Americas TB Coalition  
The Arc of the United States  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association for Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Association of American Cancer Institutes  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Immunization Managers

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network  
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  
ChangeLab Solutions  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS  
CommunicationFIRST  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Delta Vector Control District  
Easterseals  
Emergency Nurses Association  
End AIDS Now  
Endocrine Society  
Entomological Society of America  
Epilepsy Foundation  
Florida Institute for Health Innovation  
Foundation for Healthy Generations  
The Gerontological Society of America  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality  
Global Health Security Roundtable  
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative  
Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center  
Health Resources in Action  
Healthy Schools Campaign  
Healthy Teen Network  
Hepatitis Education Project  
Hep Free Hawaii  
HIV Medicine Association  
Human Rights Campaign  
Immunize Nevada  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Let's Kick AIDS Survivor Syndrome New York

Los Angeles LGBT Center  
March of Dimes  
NAACP  
National Alliance of State and Territorial of AIDS Directors (NASTAD)  
National Association for Biomedical Research  
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of School Nurses  
National Athletic Trainers' Association  
National Black Nurses Association  
National Center for Healthy Housing  
National Coalition of STD Directors  
National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention  
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National League of Cities  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Tuberculosis Controllers Association  
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable  
National WIC Association  
National Women's Health Network  
New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute  
NMAC  
Novavax  
OSA, The Optical Society  
Partners for Our Children  
Peggy Lillis Foundation  
PFLAG National  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevention Institute  
Project HOPE  
Public Health Accreditation Board  
Public Health Institute  
Public Health Management Corporation  
Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness GWU  
Research!America  
Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition  
Safe States Alliance  
Seqirus  
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change  
Society of General Internal Medicine

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America  
Society for Public Health Education  
Society for Vector Ecology  
Spina Bifida Association  
Stop TB USA  
Treatment Action Group  
Trust for America's Health  
USA Patient Network  
Vaccinate Your Family  
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials  
Washington State Public Health Association  
Welcome Back Initiative  
YMCA of the USA

cc: Chairman Lamar Alexander, Senate HELP Committee  
Ranking Member Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee and Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
Chairman Frank Pallone, House Energy & Commerce Committee  
Ranking Member Greg Walden, House Energy & Commerce Committee  
Chairman Peter DeFazio, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
Ranking Member Sam Graves, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
Chairman Roy Blunt, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Ranking Member Tom Cole, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies