

February 12, 2021

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
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 Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leaders McConnell 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 and workforce. This investment is critical to support the public health system to better respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to strengthen it before the next pandemic hits and avoid the loss of life and social and economic disruption we are experiencing today. The pandemic has clearly shown that our federal public health priorities cannot be reached without the critical work of state, local, tribal and territorial health departments. 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, have already been devastated and are projected to continue to decline.<sup>1,2</sup> This will leave our nation even more vulnerable to emerging health risks. By building the core public health infrastructure in 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 long-term, additional annual funding for CDC, state, local, tribal and territorial core public health infrastructure to modernize the nation’s public health system, rebuild the workforce, and promote healthier communities.**

The COVID-19 pandemic is illustrating in the direst terms the consequences of underfunding public health. The response is personnel-heavy – including rolling out the largest vaccination campaign in U.S. history, investigating cases and conducting contact tracing, managing supplies

---

<sup>1</sup> Coronavirus (COVID-19): Revised State Revenue Projections. NCSL. Updated Jan 18, 2021. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Revised State Revenue Projections \(ncsl.org\)](https://www.ncsl.org/coronavirus)

<sup>2</sup> Auerbach AJ et al. Fiscal effects of COVID-19. Brookings Institution, Sept 23, 2020. [Fiscal effects of COVID-19 \(brookings.edu\)](https://www.brookings.edu/research/fiscal-effects-of-covid-19/)

and volunteers, conducting risk communications, coordinating with governmental and healthcare partners, and planning for the next phase of response. While short-term funding has been essential, it cannot sustain the workforce or effectively modernize public health. A significant, sustainable investment is needed to support such essential activities as disease surveillance, epidemiology, laboratory capacity, all-hazards preparedness and response; policy development and support; communications; community partnership development; promoting equity; and organizational competencies.

For too long, the nation has neglected basic public health capacity, and the nation's response to the pandemic reflects this chronic underfunding. Since the 2008 recession, state and local health agencies have lost nearly one quarter of the workforce.<sup>3</sup> Health departments are still dependent on archaic methods of tracking COVID-19 and other diseases, including phone, fax and paper.<sup>4</sup> CDC's funding remains just below its level in FY2008, when adjusting for inflation.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, state funding for health departments has dropped by 16 percent per capita, and funding for local health departments has fallen by 18 percent since 2010.<sup>6</sup> That means there has been little room to modernize, recruit, retain, and retrain the workforce of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and address emerging threats. In fact, the estimated gap in achieving a minimum level of public health protection for all communities is about \$13 per person per year, yielding the requested \$4.5 billion.<sup>7</sup> Despite being a cost-effective method of preventing disease, this starvation of public health has prevented the nation from addressing chronic disease epidemics, surging rates of substance misuse, and health inequities, making many communities particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. It is critical that all Americans can trust that the public health system is strong around them, no matter their zip code.

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>8</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 funding for the initial response, including for the state and local public health response.

---

<sup>3</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>4</sup> Bajak F. Faxes and email: Old technology slows COVID-19 response. AP. May 13, 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/aff923bc384089489d168ee2ced71a93>

<sup>5</sup> In FY 2008, CDC funding was \$6.375 billion (program level). FY 2021 funding is \$7.819 billion (program level). Adjusted for inflation, the 2008 number would be \$7.864 billion in 2020 dollars.

<sup>6</sup> Hollowed-Out Public Health System Faces More Cuts Amid Virus. AP and Kaiser Health News, July 1, 2020. <https://khn.org/news/us-public-health-system-underfunded-under-threat-faces-more-cuts-amid-covid-pandemic/>

<sup>7</sup> Public Health Leadership Forum. Developing a financing system to support public health infrastructure. Available at: [http://www.resolve.org/site-healthleadershipforum/files/2018/11/PHLF\\_developingafinancingsystemtosupportpublichealth.pdf](http://www.resolve.org/site-healthleadershipforum/files/2018/11/PHLF_developingafinancingsystemtosupportpublichealth.pdf).

<sup>8</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/>

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, such as surging levels of chronic disease, the substance misuse and suicide epidemics, infectious diseases, injuries, natural disasters and environmental hazards. We urge you to act now to prevent and prepare for the next pandemic.

Sincerely,

317 Coalition  
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Advocates for Better Children's Diets  
AIDS Action Baltimore  
All Youth Access, LLC  
Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's  
Impact Movement  
America Walks  
America's Essential Hospitals  
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma &  
Immunology  
American Academy of Nursing  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Clinical  
Chemistry  
American Association for Respiratory Care  
American Association for the Study of Liver  
Diseases  
American Association of Colleges of  
Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of  
Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Neuromuscular &  
Electrodiagnostic Medicine  
American Association on Health and  
Disability  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action  
Network (ACS CAN)  
American Clinical Laboratory Association  
American College Health Association  
American College of Clinical Pharmacy  
American College of Medical Toxicology  
American College of Obstetricians and  
Gynecologists  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Heart Association  
American Immunization Registry  
Association

American Kidney Fund  
American Liver Foundation  
American Lung Association  
American Medical Student Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American Podiatric Medical Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Sexual Health Association  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society of Hematology  
American Society of Tropical Medicine &  
Hygiene  
American Thoracic Society  
APLA Health  
Arizona Council of Human Service  
Providers  
Arizona Public Health Association  
Arkansas Public Health Association  
Arthritis Foundation  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health  
Forum  
Association for Clinical and Translational  
Science  
Association for Professionals in Infection  
Control and Epidemiology  
Association of American Cancer Institutes  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Food and Drug Officials  
Association of Immunization Managers  
Association of Maternal & Child Health  
Programs  
Association of Minority Health Professions  
Schools  
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 Dental  
 Directors  
 Association of State and Territorial Health  
 Officials  
 Association of State Public Health  
 Nutritionists  
 Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America  
 Authority Health  
 Autism Family Services of New Jersey  
 Big Cities Health Coalition  
 Bipartisan Policy Center  
 Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin  
 Bloom Health Coalition  
 Boulder County Public Health  
 Breathe New Hampshire  
 California Health Collaborative  
 California Hepatitis C Task Force  
 Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
 Campesinos Sin Fronteras  
 Cancer Support Community  
 Caregivers of New Jersey  
 Caring Ambassadors Program  
 Cascade AIDS Project  
 Catholic Health Association of the United  
 States  
 Cause Engagement Associates  
 Center for Advocacy for the Rights and  
 Interests of the Elderly (CARIE)  
 Center for Community Resilience  
 Center for School Health Innovation &  
 Quality  
 CenterLink: The Community of LGBT  
 Centers  
 Chicago Chapter National Black Nurses  
 Association  
 Children's Environmental Health Network  
 Christian Council of Delmarva  
 Clinical Research Forum  
 Coalition for Clinical and Translational  
 Science  
 Colorado Public Health Association  
 Colorado School Medicaid Consortium  
 Commissioned Officers Association of the  
 USPHS

Common Threads  
 Communities Joined in Action, Inc.  
 Connecticut Public Health Association  
 Consortium for State and Regional  
 Interoperability  
 Council of State and Territorial  
 Epidemiologists  
 County Health Executives Association of  
 California  
 Delaware Academy of Medicine and the  
 Delaware Public Health Association  
 Digestive Disease National Coalition  
 Doctors for America  
 Dorchester County Health Department  
 Dystonia Medical Research Foundation  
 Eating Disorders Coalition for Research,  
 Policy & Action  
 Education Development Center  
 Empower Nutrition & Wellness  
 Endocrine Society  
 Entomological Society of America  
 Epilepsy Alliance America  
 Epilepsy Foundation  
 Epilepsy Services of New Jersey  
 Equality California  
 Florida Institute for Health Innovation  
 Florida Public Health Association  
 Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky  
 Franklin Regional Council of Governments  
 GBS|CIDP Foundation International  
 Geary County Health Department  
 Georgia Public Health Association  
 GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing  
 LGBTQ Equality  
 Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and  
 Social Justice  
 Global Liver Institute  
 GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer  
 Good Days  
 Goshen Health  
 Grand Traverse County Health Department  
 Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, Inc  
 Hartsfield Health Systems Consulting  
 Hawaii Public Health Organization  
 Health by Design  
 Health Care Improvement Foundation

Health Care Without Harm  
Health Equity Initiative  
Health in Justice Action Lab, Northeastern  
University School of Law  
Health Resources in Action  
Healthcare Leadership Council  
Healthy Schools Campaign  
Heartland Alliance  
Hep B United  
Hep B United Philadelphia  
Hepatitis B Foundation  
Hispanic Health Initiatives, Inc.  
HIV + Hepatitis Policy Institute  
HIV Medicine Association  
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health  
Hollywood Senior Center  
Hope and Help Center of Central Florida,  
Inc.  
Hope Charities  
Human Rights Campaign  
Idaho Public Health Association  
Illinois Public Health Association  
Illinois Public Health Institute  
Impact York County  
In the Public Interest  
Indiana Public Health Association  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
International Foundation for Gastrointestinal  
Disorders  
Interstitial Cystitis Association  
Iowa Public Health Association  
Johns Hopkins University Institute for  
Health and Productivity Studies  
Johnson County Public Health, Iowa  
Journal Public Health Management &  
Practice  
Jump IN for Healthy Kids  
Kansas City Missouri Health Department  
Kansas Public Health Association  
Lafayette County Health Depart  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California  
Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health  
Life Raft Group  
Local Public Health Association of  
Minnesota

Louisiana Public Health Association  
Louisiana Public Health Institute  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.  
Lymphatic Education & Research Network  
Macoupin County Public Health Dept  
Maine Public Health Association  
March of Dimes  
Mary Ann Liebert Inc.  
Massachusetts Public Health Association  
Message Carriers of Pennsylvania  
METAvivor  
Metropolitan Health Organizations of the  
Kansas City Area (MOHAKCA)  
Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy  
Living, UTHealth School of Public  
Health in Austin  
Michigan Association for Local Public  
Health  
Michigan District Health Department No. 2  
Michigan District Health Department No. 4  
Michigan Public Health Association  
MindWise Innovations  
Minnesota Public Health Association  
Missouri Association of Area Agencies on  
Aging  
Missouri Association of Local Public Health  
Agencies  
Missouri Public Health Association  
Mon Health Systems  
Montgomery Citizens United for Prosper  
(MCUP)  
Mosquito and Vector Control Association of  
California  
MS Public Health Association  
National Alliance of State & Territorial  
AIDS Directors  
National Alopecia Areata Foundation  
National Association for Public Health  
Statistics and Information Systems  
National Association of County and City  
Health Officials  
National Association of Local Boards of  
Health  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners  
in Women's Health

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of State of Offices of Minority Health  
National Athletic Trainers' Association  
National Capital Area SOPHE (NCA SOPHE)  
National Center for Healthy Housing  
National Coalition of STD Directors  
National Consumers League  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National Health Law Program  
National League for Nursing  
National Medical Association  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Pancreas Foundation  
National Tuberculosis Controllers Association  
National WIC Association  
NC Public Health Association  
Nebraska Action Coalition- Future of Nursing  
Nemours Children's Health System  
NephCure Kidney International  
Nevada Public Health Association  
New Hampshire Public Health Association  
New Hampshire Public Health Association  
New Jersey Public Health Association  
New Orleans Health Department  
New York Academy of Medicine  
New York State Public Health Association  
North Carolina Alliance for Health  
North Carolina Alliance of Public Health Agencies  
North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors  
North Dakota Public Health Association  
North Runnels Hospital  
Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition  
Nova Southeastern University  
Undergraduate Public Health Student Association  
Nurture  
Ohio Public Health Association

Oregon Public Health Association  
Partnership for Better Health  
Partnership for Children's Oral Health  
Patient Services, Inc.  
Peggy Lillis Foundation  
Pennsylvania Public Health Association  
PestronkGlass  
Premier, INC  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevention Institute  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
Project Sleep  
Public Health Accreditation Board  
Public Health Foundation  
Public Health Institute  
Public Health Management Corporation  
Public Health Solutions  
Puerto Rico Public Housing Administration  
Pulmonary Hypertension Association  
Redstone Center for Prevention and Wellness  
Research!America  
RESOLVE  
Respiratory Health Association  
Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation  
Rhode Island Public Health Association  
Riverside Community Care  
RiverStone Health  
RIZE Consultants  
Safe States Alliance  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility  
SANIPLAN  
School-Based Health Alliance  
Scleroderma Foundation  
SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators  
Silver State Equality-Nevada  
Sleep Research Society  
Society for Vector Ecology  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education  
South Dakota Public Health Association

Southern California Public Health Association  
Susan G. Komen  
Tennessee Public Health Association  
Texas Public Health Association  
The AIDS Institute  
The American College of Preventive Medicine  
The Family Resource Network  
The Foundation for Sustainable Communities  
The Gerontological Society of America  
The Immunization Partnership  
The Viscardi Center  
Training Resources Network, Inc.  
Treatment Action Group  
Tri-County Health Department, Colorado  
Trinity Health  
Trust for America's Health  
Tulane University Health Sciences Center  
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee  
United for Charitable Assistance

University of Maryland School of Public Health  
University of Massachusetts Medical School  
University of Rochester  
University of Washington School of Public Health  
Unmarried, Single But Not Alone, LLC.  
US Hereditary Angioedema Association  
Utah Public Health Association  
Valley AIDS Council  
Vermont Public Health Association  
Virginia Public Health Association  
Vision, Inc.  
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials  
Washington State Board of Health  
Washington State Public Health Association  
WE ACT For Environmental Action  
Winooski Partnership for Prevention, Inc.  
Wisconsin Public Health Association  
Women's Health Institute

cc: Chair Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Ranking Member Richard Burr, Senate HELP Committee  
Ranking Member Roy Blunt, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Chairman Frank Pallone, House Energy & Commerce Committee  
Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers, House Energy & Commerce Committee  
Chair Anna Eshoo, House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee  
Ranking Member Brett Guthrie, House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee  
Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee  
Ranking Member Tom Cole, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies