



February 16, 2010

Dear Senator:

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and health departments that work every day to prevent disease, protect health, and promote wellness, join to urge you to work with your colleagues to secure \$715 million in the Senate jobs bill to stem the tide of job losses in state and local health departments.

Health departments protect the well-being of the public. They respond to all natural disasters that have an impact on human health and are constantly preparing and exercising to respond to public health emergencies, including acts of bioterrorism. The nation's 2800 local health departments and 57 state and territorial health departments collaborate to detect and stop outbreaks of disease and help keep food and water safe. However, budget cuts at the federal, state and local levels have necessitated lay-offs and job losses through attrition that have resulted in reductions in essential public health services across the country.

In the first half of 2009, 8,000 local health department jobs were lost and an additional 12,000 faced mandatory furloughs. Nearly every state health agency has suffered job losses in recent budget years. Collectively, state and local health departments have lost more than 17,000 jobs and the trend continues. The cumulative reductions in staff are seriously diminishing health departments' capacities to keep people safe and healthy in urban and rural communities in all regions of the country. State health departments are responding to budget cuts by eliminating programs (42%), reducing services (85%), and cutting back staff via layoffs (40%) and attrition (81%). Among local health departments, 55% have cut services, including maternal and child health, environment health, emergency preparedness, and preventive health services.

\$715 million would restore 8,500 jobs, helping to reinstate nearly half of the health department jobs lost from January 2008 to June 2009, based on a median expenditure per full-time employee of \$84,000 for salary and related benefits. For every \$1 million, 12 former health employees could return to work.

In order to address the impact of the current adverse economic conditions on public health department jobs, ASTHO and NACCHO urge you to include relief for local and state health departments in any jobs legislation that passes Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact Donna Brown with NACCHO (202-507-4197 or dbrown@naccho.org) or Christine Evans with ASTHO (571-527-3144 or cevens@astho.org) for more information.

Sincerely,

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