

December 23, 2008

Dear Representative:

We, the undersigned national public health organizations, are writing to urge you to include a robust public health investment in any economic recovery package considered by Congress. The public health community has many programs that would create jobs, contribute to efforts to reduce future healthcare costs, and infrastructure development to build a healthier America, many of which are “shovel-ready”.

The economic recovery package should include the following four major areas to invest in public health:

- **Public Health Workforce:** by 2020, the nation will be facing a shortfall of 250,000 public health workers. Shortages of public health physicians, public health nurses, epidemiologists, health care educators, and administrators are anticipated. The stimulus legislation could be used for job training, loan repayment and other financial aid, and fellowship programs to build capacity and to create a pipeline of well-trained workers entering the public health workforce, as well as address the shortage of nursing faculty responsible for educating the next generation of nurses. The funds will also restore job losses sustained by state and local public health departments and laboratories.
- **Public Health Emergency Preparedness:** Since FY2005, state and local public health preparedness grants to states have been cut 25 percent; along with state budget cuts, these decreases severely threaten progress made on preparedness. Restoring federal public health preparedness funding would allow states and localities to rehire and maintain staff, and improve laboratory, surveillance, planning, and epidemiological capacity that will be necessary to respond to a natural disaster, disease outbreak, or terrorist attack.
- **Health Information Technology (HIT):** If HIT is included in economic stimulus legislation, the needs of the public health system must be considered. The interoperability of health care, public health, and laboratory systems and the use of health data by public health departments and researchers is essential to effectively monitor and protect the population’s health.
- **Fight Chronic and Infectious Disease and Promote Injury Prevention:** Increase investment in efforts to prevent disease, injury and disability and increase investment in public health research – efforts that will lead to a strengthening the public health system. For example, investing in states, localities and communities to prevent chronic disease would create public and private jobs, build a community infrastructure that encourages healthy lifestyles, and ultimately reduce costs to the healthcare system. Such grants can help create private-public partnerships and leverage state and local resources to have an immediate impact in a community.

As you consider economic recovery legislation, we ask that you consider public health to be an integral piece of the state of our economy. A strong public health system involves numerous sectors: the healthcare system, the built environment, state and local health departments, laboratories, national governmental agencies, schools of public health, and community organizations and businesses. The economic recovery package offers an opportunity to improve the nation's health by increasing investments in programs such as prevention and preparedness, strengthening the public health infrastructure and to workforce development, and by providing access to affordable, quality health care for our nation's vulnerable children.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

American Public Health Association
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Center for Biosecurity, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
National Association of County and City Health Officials
Partnership for Prevention
Trust for America's Health