

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

January 11, 2010

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), thank you for your vote in support of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

This bill makes important strides by increasing coverage of the uninsured and encouraging greater utilization of clinical preventive services. In addition, the bill provides support to the local public health infrastructure through the Prevention and Public Health Fund.

I respectfully urge that the core public health infrastructure provisions in the House- passed Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) be included in any final version of health reform legislation sent to the White House. The 2,800 local health departments across the nation work every day to prevent disease, promote wellness, and protect health. In the first half of 2009, approximately 8,000 local health department personnel had their jobs eliminated and an additional 12,000 staff had their hours cut or faced mandatory furloughs. This year's severe job losses and resulting program cuts follow a loss of 7,000 local health department jobs in 2008. These significant funding, staffing, and program cuts underscore the growing need for sustained support for local health department infrastructure. The Core Public Health Infrastructure for State, Local, and Tribal Health Departments section of the House passed health reform bill (Section 3161 of H.R. 3962) would help to address this critical lack of funding with the establishment of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant program for state, local, and tribal health departments.

A stable, reliable funding stream for local health department prevention efforts, coupled with the prevention trust fund and workforce provisions included in both the House- passed and Senate merged bill, will help to sustain the work of local and state health departments and population-based prevention activities that are beyond the reach of the medical care system. Together these provisions represent an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen the public health system through local health departments across the country.

Thank you again for your continued support of public health and prevention.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Pestronk
Executive Director

