

# NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

November 20, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), I would like to express support for your recently-released legislation, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. NACCHO urges the Senate to pass this groundbreaking legislation, which will continue the nation on a path toward transforming the health system to one that promotes prevention and public health.

Thank you for including important public health provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. In particular, NACCHO supports the following:

- The Prevention and Public Health Fund provides much-needed resources to local and state health departments to sustain and expand prevention and wellness efforts, such as conducting community-based needs assessments and implementing evidence-based interventions to promote healthy living and prevent disease.
- Public health workforce provisions of the bill address shortages that threaten the nation's capacity to protect people. Loan repayment and scholarships for public health professionals are critical to managing this problem.

A stable, consistent, and reliable source of federal funding for local health departments is needed. According to a recent NACCHO report *Survey of Local Health Department Job Losses and Program Cuts*, approximately 8,000 local health department personnel had their jobs eliminated in the first half of 2009 and an additional 12,000 staff had their hours cut or faced mandatory furloughs. Collectively, these reductions are diminishing the capacity of local health departments to keep people healthy, respond to public health emergencies, and address the escalating burden of chronic diseases. The magnitude of these cuts provides evidence of the growing need for sustained support for local health department infrastructure, as provided for in the Prevention and Public Health Fund.

The current H1N1 flu outbreak reveals the need for a robust local health department infrastructure in order to achieve consistently high influenza immunization rates routinely. Had these investments been made and sustained over time, the patchwork system that currently exists would have been repaired and local health departments would not be diverting staff from other critical areas of protection to respond to the H1N1 flu outbreak. The supplemental funding provided by Congress has helped local health departments plan and undertake a mass vaccination and education effort, but a stable infrastructure that is not dependent on emergency funding is needed for the long term.

NACCHO looks forward to working with you to ensure passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Pestronk  
Executive Director

