

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

July 24, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the nation's nearly 3,000 local health departments that protect the public's health, I write to express our support for the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, which would end the threat of sequester for non-defense discretionary programs.

Local health departments are currently dealing with high-profile public health challenges like measles and the opioid crisis, in addition to the work they do each day to ensure the safety of the water we drink, the food we eat, and the air we breathe. Federal investments are critical to these efforts and cuts caused by sequestration would set back the progress that has been made to date in these and many other areas of public health.

Our nation's governmental public health system is a partnership across the local, state, and federal level. Federal funding is critical to support public health agencies at the city and county level to keep communities across the country healthy and safe. The vast majority of spending on health in our nation goes toward health care services, not public health. Yet these critical investments prevent expensive and debilitating illness and keep communities productive and thriving.

NACCHO and local health departments appreciate the bipartisan effort that went into crafting this compromise legislation. Unfortunately, the final agreement once again extends sequestration funding reductions to the Prevention and Public Health Fund beyond fiscal year 2027. It is important to note that this simply delays access to important funding for local and state prevention efforts, vaccinations, and other initiatives led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and we urge Congress to work together to mitigate these cuts in the future.

We support the deal, however, because the alternative is far worse for public health. As you are aware, without a new budget agreement, overall non-defense discretionary funding—including most of the dollars that go to support critical public health efforts — is facing the equivalent of a 12 percent cut across the board (adjusting for inflation) compared to fiscal year 2019 levels. The reality could mean many areas would sustain far deeper cuts as Congress would seek to limit the damage in certain areas at the expense of other national priorities.

Thank you for your attention to the importance of protecting health in communities across the nation and for your work securing a budget agreement that will allow our nation to move forward as it plans its



spending priorities for fiscal year 2020. We urge its swift adoption. Please contact Adriane Casalotti, MPH, MSW, with any questions at acasalotti@naccho.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori Tremmel Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Lori Tremmel Freeman, MBA
Chief Executive Officer

