February 12, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leaders McConnell and McCarthy:

As Congress undertakes the next iteration of legislation to speed the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the undersigned organizations urge you to include a significant, long-term investment in public health infrastructure and workforce. This investment is critical to support the public health system to better respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to strengthen it before the next pandemic hits and avoid the loss of life and social and economic disruption we are experiencing today. The pandemic has clearly shown that our federal public health priorities cannot be reached without the critical work of state, local, tribal and territorial health departments. The importance of strong, predictable federal investment in this system is even more vital now as the economic impacts of the pandemic are felt nationwide. State and local governmental budgets, and therefore public health budgets, have already been devastated and are projected to continue to decline.1,2 This will leave our nation even more vulnerable to emerging health risks. By building the core public health infrastructure in states, localities, tribal governments and territories, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the nation will be better prepared for the next threat.

Our groups recommend $4.5 billion in long-term, additional annual funding for CDC, state, local, tribal and territorial core public health infrastructure to modernize the nation’s public health system, rebuild the workforce, and promote healthier communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic is illustrating in the direst terms the consequences of underfunding public health. The response is personnel-heavy – including rolling out the largest vaccination campaign in U.S. history, investigating cases and conducting contact tracing, managing supplies

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and volunteers, conducting risk communications, coordinating with governmental and healthcare partners, and planning for the next phase of response. While short-term funding has been essential, it cannot sustain the workforce or effectively modernize public health. A significant, sustainable investment is needed to support such essential activities as disease surveillance, epidemiology, laboratory capacity, all-hazards preparedness and response; policy development and support; communications; community partnership development; promoting equity; and organizational competencies.

For too long, the nation has neglected basic public health capacity, and the nation’s response to the pandemic reflects this chronic underfunding. Since the 2008 recession, state and local health agencies have lost nearly one quarter of the workforce. Health departments are still dependent on archaic methods of tracking COVID-19 and other diseases, including phone, fax and paper. CDC’s funding remains just below its level in FY2008, when adjusting for inflation. Meanwhile, state funding for health departments has dropped by 16 percent per capita, and funding for local health departments has fallen by 18 percent since 2010. That means there has been little room to modernize, recruit, retain, and retrain the workforce of the 21st Century and address emerging threats. In fact, the estimated gap in achieving a minimum level of public health protection for all communities is about $13 per person per year, yielding the requested $4.5 billion. Despite being a cost-effective method of preventing disease, this starvation of public health has prevented the nation from addressing chronic disease epidemics, surging rates of substance misuse, and health inequities, making many communities particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. It is critical that all Americans can trust that the public health system is strong around them, no matter their zip code.

The U.S. has followed a pattern of underfunding of vital public health services, followed by a crisis, a quick infusion of cash, and then dwindling investments over time. This pattern is placing American lives at risk. We must think not just of the short-term needs of this pandemic, but the long-term readiness of our nation. We applaud Congress for taking quick action to provide funding for the initial response, including for the state and local public health response.

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5 In FY 2008, CDC funding was $6.375 billion (program level). FY 2021 funding is $7.819 billion (program level). Adjusted for inflation, the 2008 number would be $7.864 billion in 2020 dollars.


However, short-term, supplemental funding does not allow public health to recruit and retain the expert workforce needed for protecting the nation against emerging threats, such as surging levels of chronic disease, the substance misuse and suicide epidemics, infectious diseases, injuries, natural disasters and environmental hazards. We urge you to act now to prevent and prepare for the next pandemic.

Sincerely,

317 Coalition  
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Advocates for Better Children's Diets  
AIDS Action Baltimore  
All Youth Access, LLC  
Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's Impact Movement  
America Walks  
America’s Essential Hospitals  
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology  
American Academy of Nursing  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Clinical Chemistry  
American Association for Respiratory Care  
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Neuromuscular & Electrodagnostic Medicine  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)  
American Clinical Laboratory Association  
American College Health Association  
American College of Clinical Pharmacy  
American College of Medical Toxicology  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Heart Association  
American Immunization Registry Association  
American Kidney Fund  
American Liver Foundation  
American Lung Association  
American Medical Student Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American Podiatric Medical Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Sexual Health Association  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society of Hematology  
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene  
American Thoracic Society  
APLA Health  
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers  
Arkansas Public Health Association  
Arthritis Foundation  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Association for Clinical and Translational Science  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association of American Cancer Institutes  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Food and Drug Officials  
Association of Immunization Managers  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools  
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Authority Health
Autism Family Services of New Jersey
Big Cities Health Coalition
Bipartisan Policy Center
Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin
Bloom Health Coalition
Boulder County Public Health
Breathe New Hampshire
California Health Collaborative
California Hepatitis C Task Force
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Campesinos Sin Fronteras
Cancer Support Community
Caregivers of New Jersey
Caring Ambassadors Program
Cascade AIDS Project
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Cause Engagement Associates
Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE)
Center for Community Resilience
Center for School Health Innovation & Quality
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Chicago Chapter National Black Nurses Association
Children's Environmental Health Network
Christian Council of Delmarva
Clinical Research Forum
Coalition for Clinical and Translational Science
Colorado Public Health Association
Colorado School Medicaid Consortium
Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS
Common Threads
Communities Joined in Action, Inc.
Connecticut Public Health Association
Consortium for State and Regional Interoperability
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
County Health Executives Association of California
Delaware Academy of Medicine and the Delaware Public Health Association
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Doctors for America
Dorchester County Health Department
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Education Development Center
Empower Nutrition & Wellness
Endocrine Society
Entomological Society of America
Epilepsy Alliance America
Epilepsy Foundation
Epilepsy Services of New Jersey
Equality California
Florida Institute for Health Innovation
Florida Public Health Association
Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Geary County Health Department
Georgia Public Health Association
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Global Liver Institute
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
Good Days
Goshen Health
Grand Traverse County Health Department
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, Inc
Hartsfield Health Systems Consulting
Hawaii Public Health Organization
Health by Design
Health Care Improvement Foundation
Health Care Without Harm
Health Equity Initiative
Health in Justice Action Lab, Northeastern University School of Law
Health Resources in Action
Healthcare Leadership Council
Healthy Schools Campaign
Heartland Alliance
Hep B United
Hep B United Philadelphia
Hepatitis B Foundation
Hispanic Health Initiatives, Inc.
HIV + Hepatitis Policy Institute
HIV Medicine Association
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Hollywood Senior Center
Hope and Help Center of Central Florida, Inc.
Hope Charities
Human Rights Campaign
Idaho Public Health Association
Illinois Public Health Association
Illinois Public Health Institute
Impact York County
In the Public Interest
Indiana Public Health Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders
Interstitial Cystitis Association
Iowa Public Health Association
Johns Hopkins University Institute for Health and Productivity Studies
Johnson County Public Health, Iowa
Journal Public Health Management & Practice
Jump IN for Healthy Kids
Kansas City Missouri Health Department
Kansas Public Health Association
Lafayette County Health Depart
Lakeshore Foundation
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health
Life Raft Group
Local Public Health Association of Minnesota

Louisiana Public Health Association
Louisiana Public Health Institute
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Lymphatic Education & Research Network
Macoupin County Public Health Dept
Maine Public Health Association
March of Dimes
Mary Ann Liebert Inc.
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Message Carriers of Pennsylvania
METAvivor
Metropolitan Health Organizations of the Kansas City Area (MOHAKCA)
Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living, UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin
Michigan Association for Local Public Health
Michigan District Health Department No. 2
Michigan District Health Department No. 4
Michigan Public Health Association
MindWise Innovations
Minnesota Public Health Association
Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Missouri Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Missouri Public Health Association
Mon Health Systems
Montgomery Citizens United for Prosper (MCUP)
Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California
MS Public Health Association
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors
National Alopecia Areata Foundation
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of Health
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of State of Offices of Minority Health  
National Athletic Trainers' Association  
National Capital Area SOPHE (NCA SOPHE)  
National Center for Healthy Housing  
National Coalition of STD Directors  
National Consumers League  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National Health Law Program  
National League for Nursing  
National Medical Association  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Pancreas Foundation  
National Tuberculosis Controllers Association  
National WIC Association  
NC Public Health Association  
Nebraska Action Coalition- Future of Nursing  
Nemours Children's Health System  
NephCure Kidney International  
Nevada Public Health Association  
New Hampshire Public Health Association  
New Hampshire Public Health Association  
New Jersey Public Health Association  
New Orleans Health Department  
New York Academy of Medicine  
New York State Public Health Association  
North Carolina Alliance for Health  
North Carolina Alliance of Public Health Agencies  
North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors  
North Dakota Public Health Association  
North Runnels Hospital  
Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition  
Nova Southeastern University  
Undergraduate Public Health Student Association  
Nurture  
Ohio Public Health Association  
Oregon Public Health Association  
Partnership for Better Health  
Partnership for Children's Oral Health  
Patient Services, Inc.  
Peggy Lillis Foundation  
Pennsylvania Public Health Association  
PestronGlass  
Premier, INC  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevention Institute  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
Project Sleep  
Public Health Accreditation Board  
Public Health Foundation  
Public Health Institute  
Public Health Management Corporation  
Public Health Solutions  
Puerto Rico Public Housing Administration  
Pulmonary Hypertension Association  
Redstone Center for Prevention and Wellness  
Research!America  
RESOLVE  
Respiratory Health Association  
Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation  
Rhode Island Public Health Association  
Riverside Community Care  
RiverStone Health  
RIZE Consultants  
Safe States Alliance  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility  
SANIPLAN  
School-Based Health Alliance  
Scleroderma Foundation  
SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators  
Silver State Equality-Nevada  
Sleep Research Society  
Society for Vector Ecology  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education  
South Dakota Public Health Association
Southern California Public Health Association
Susan G. Komen
Tennessee Public Health Association
Texas Public Health Association
The AIDS Institute
The American College of Preventive Medicine
The Family Resource Network
The Foundation for Sustainable Communities
The Gerontological Society of America
The Immunization Partnership
The Viscardi Center
Training Resources Network, Inc.
Treatment Action Group
Tri-County Health Department, Colorado
Trinity Health
Trust for America’s Health
Tulane University Health Sciences Center
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee
United for Charitable Assistance

University of Maryland School of Public Health
University of Massachusetts Medical School
University of Rochester
University of Washington School of Public Health
Unmarried, Single But Not Alone, LLC.
US Hereditary Angioedema Association
Utah Public Health Association
Valley AIDS Council
Vermont Public Health Association
Virginia Public Health Association
Vision, Inc.
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials
Washington State Board of Health
Washington State Public Health Association
WE ACT For Environmental Action
Winooski Partnership for Prevention, Inc.
Wisconsin Public Health Association
Women's Health Institute

cc: Chair Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
    Ranking Member Richard Burr, Senate HELP Committee
    Ranking Member Roy Blunt, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
    Chairman Frank Pallone, House Energy & Commerce Committee
    Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers, House Energy & Commerce Committee
    Chair Anna Eshoo, House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee
    Ranking Member Brett Guthrie, House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee
    Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
    Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee
    Ranking Member Tom Cole, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies