

October 23, 2017

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

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

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
House Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the 69 undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge Congress to provide emergency supplemental funding for critical public health, healthcare, and behavioral health services to address the ongoing crises in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands and other states impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Emergency supplemental funds are needed and will be utilized to enhance and sustain current state, territorial, local, and community response and recovery efforts in collaboration with federal partners including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other relevant agencies at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Public health officials are working tirelessly to provide necessary disease prevention and health promotion services to protect the health of all those affected by recent natural disasters, especially our most vulnerable citizens including children, older adults, and individuals with underlying medical conditions or special needs. However, the needs of these communities are great and without federal support to address the ongoing public health issues we fear the consequences to the American public will be grave. Emergency funding is needed to effectively address the following concerns:

- **Infectious Disease:** Ensure access to safe water and food and clean, properly maintained shelters and temporary housing to prevent vector-borne diseases. Regarding vector-borne diseases, public health officials must re-establish disease surveillance and effective mosquito control to prevent the spread of diseases such as Zika, Dengue, and West Nile Virus. Both in the early stages and throughout recovery, health officials must restore essential public health activities such as laboratory testing services, immunizations against vaccine-preventable diseases, and health screening, surveillance, and counselling for communicable and chronic diseases.
- **Environmental Health:** Flooding, power outages, and the breakdown of infrastructure can lead to exposure to a range of dangerous substances such as mold, sewage, chemicals, and other hazardous materials. Environmental public health workers must assist in assessing risks and community needs, educating residents on steps they can take to protect themselves and remediate these hazards when possible, and determining whether healthcare or other facilities are safe for re-entry and providing training to employers on workplace safety.
- **Special Populations:** Pregnant women, children, and individuals with underlying medical conditions or special needs are at highest risk of suffering adverse medical consequences during times of disaster. Services targeting these populations such as disease surveillance systems;

counseling, testing, and treatment; and health education must be rapidly restored and maintained to ensure appropriate follow-up care and improved outcomes.

- **Access to Mental Health Services:** Funding should be available to state, territorial, local, and community efforts to support additional mental health professionals and enable research into long-term projects to fully meet the mental health needs of those coping with and recovering from disasters.

The public health community also urges Congress to continue its longstanding support of CDC's Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program and the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response's Hospital Preparedness Program. These funds are critical to ensuring core capacities are in place before a disaster strikes.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Carolyn Mullen ([cmullen@astho.org](mailto:cmullen@astho.org)), chief of government affairs and public relations at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Liver Foundation  
American Lung Association  
American Lung Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society of Hematology  
American Thoracic Society  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Immunization Managers  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools, Inc.  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Big Cities Health Coalition  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Coalition for Clinical & Translational Science  
Coalition for Health Funding  
Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS, Inc.  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Digestive Disease National Coalition  
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation  
Every Child By Two  
GBS|CIDP Foundation International

Green & Healthy Homes Initiative  
Health Resources in Action  
Healthcare Ready  
HIV Medicine Association  
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health  
Impetus - Let's Get Started LLC  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders  
Interstitial Cystitis Association  
Louisiana Public Health Institute  
March of Dimes  
METAvivor Research and Support  
NASTAD  
National Alopecia Areata Foundation  
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials  
National Coalition of STD Directors  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National WIC Association  
NephCure Kidney International  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Public Health Institute  
Pulmonary Hypertension Association  
Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation  
Scleroderma Foundation  
SIECUS  
Signalis Solutions  
Sleep Research Society  
Society for Public Health Education  
The Arc  
The Marfan Foundation  
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America  
Trust for America's Health  
U.S. Hereditary Angioedema Association  
YMCA of the USA