

June 22, 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:

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the nation's public health infrastructure and workforce, long neglected, are critical to the country's security and stability. The undersigned organizations urge you to include the Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act (PHISLA, S. 674) in the infrastructure and jobs legislation to strengthen our nation's public health capabilities. The legislation would fill long-standing gaps in public health, enable modernization of archaic technologies and systems, and build a foundation for a more effective, efficient public health response to future pandemics.

The pandemic exposed the deadly consequences of chronic underfunding of basic public health capacity. The costs can be measured in over 600,000 lives lost in the U.S. alone, the largest drop in gross domestic product since 1946,¹ trillions of dollars in response and relief funding, and the closures of thousands of schools and businesses. Health agencies were gravely outmatched by the virus, responding to the outbreak with a depleted and exhausted workforce and archaic technologies. Local health departments have lost 21 percent of their workforce capacity since 2008,² while state health agencies lost nearly 10 percent of full-time equivalent staff since 2012.³ While supplemental funding has been critical to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, most of these are not sustainable positions. Fire departments do not eliminate firefighters and equipment as soon as a blaze is contained; yet public health follows a repeated pattern of underfunding,

¹ L Mutikani, COVID-19 savages U.S. economy, 2020 performance worst in 74 years. *Reuters*, Jan 28 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-economy/covid-19-savages-u-s-economy-2020-performance-worst-in-74-years-idUSKBN29X0I8>

² NACCHO's 2019 Profile Study: Changes in Local Health Department Workforce and Finance Capacity Since 2008. NACCHO, 2020. <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/2019-Profile-Workforce-and-Finance-Capacity.pdf>

³ New Data on State Health Agencies Shows Shrinking Workforce and Decreased Funding Leading up to the COVID-19 Pandemic. ASTHO, Sept 24, 2020. <https://astho.org/Press-Room/New-Data-on-State-Health-Agencies-Shows-Shrinking-Workforce-and-Decreased-Funding-Leading-up-to-the-COVID-19-Pandemic/09-24-20/>

followed by supplemental funding and short-term hires, followed by retrenchment and layoffs. The result is lost expertise, failure to update neglected technologies, difficulty recruiting and retaining expert workforce, and an inability to address chronic health disparities.

PHISLA would establish a Core Public Health Infrastructure Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), awarding grants to state, local, Tribal and territorial health departments to ensure they have the tools, workforce, and systems in place to address existing and emerging health threats and reduce health disparities. PHISLA invests in the foundational capabilities of public health.⁴ Because public health is largely funded by disease or condition, there has been little investment in cross-cutting capabilities that are critical for effective public health. These capabilities include: public health assessment; preparedness and response; policy development and support; communications; community partnership development; organizational competencies; accountability; and equity. The legislation includes strong accountability measures through public health accreditation. The legislation dovetails with the public health workforce provisions of the American Rescue Plan (ARP), as PHISLA ramps funding up just as ARP money begins to expire.

Now is the time to learn the lessons of this devastating pandemic. We simply cannot prepare for 21st century health threats using 20th century public health tools. Congress has an opportunity to provide sustainable support to build a modern, ready public health system, rather than continue to react to disasters with short-term funding that only addresses the immediate crisis.

Sincerely,

Academic Health Resources
Action Communication and Education
Reform
AFSCME
AIDS Action Baltimore
The AIDS Institute
ALPHA, LLC
America Walks
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Clinical
Chemistry
American Association of Veterinary
Medical Colleges
American Association on Health and
Disability

American Clinical Laboratory Association
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American Heart Association (AHA)
American Kidney Fund
American Lung Association
American Nurses Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Public Health Association
American Sexual Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Reproductive
Medicine
American Society of Tropical Medicine &
Hygiene
Ashland County Health Department

⁴ Foundational Public Health Services Fact Sheet. PHNCI, Nov 2018. <https://phnci.org/uploads/resource-files/FPHS-Factsheet-November-2018.pdf>

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)
 Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
 Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
 Association of American Medical Colleges
 Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
 Association of Ohio Health Commissioners, Inc. (AOHC)
 Association of Public Health Laboratories
 Association of Public Health Nurses (APHN)
 Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
 Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators (ASNNA)
 Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
 Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
 Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
 Atlantic Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
 The Balm In Gilead, Inc.
 Big Cities Health Coalition
 Biotechnology Innovation Organization
 Black Greeks in Public Health
 Black Hawk County Public Health
 Buffalo Trace District Health Department
 California Immunization Coalition
 California Hepatitis C Task Force
 Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
 The Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy & Practice (CTIPP)
 Captura Biopharma, Inc.
 Caring Ambassadors Program
 Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona
 Catholic Health Association of the United States
 Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE)
 Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
 Central California Asthma Collaborative
 CHI Health Care
 Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition
 Children's Environmental Health Network
 Children's Mental Health Network
 Claire Heureuse Community Center, Inc.
 Colorado Public Health Association
 Colorado School Medicaid Consortium
 Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
 Common Threads
 Connecticut Public Health Association
 Delaware Academy of Medicine and the Delaware Public Health Association
 Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
 Dia de la Mujer Latina, Inc.
 Dorchester County Health Department
 Earth & Spirit Center
 Entomological Society of America
 Epilepsy Foundation
 The Foundation for Sustainable Communities
 Future of Life Institute
 Garrett Health Department
 Georgia AIDS Coalition
 Georgians for a Healthy Future
 Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
 Grand Traverse County Health Department
 Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, Inc
 George Washington University Cancer Center
 Gerontological Society of America
 Hawaii Public Health Association
 Hawaii State Rural Health Association
 Healthcare Leadership Council
 Healthcare Ready
 Healthy Teen Network
 HIV Medicine Association
 Human Rights Campaign
 Illinois Public Health Association
 Immunize Nevada
 Immunize Ohio
 Indiana Public Health Association
 Infectious Diseases Society of America
 Institute For Professional Education

Integrative Medicine for the Underserved
Iowa Public Health Association
The John A. Hartford Foundation
John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
Kansas Public Health Association
Kei-Impact Group, LLC
Lake County Health Department and
Community Health Center
Lakeshore Foundation
Lana'i Community Health Center
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Louisiana Public Health Association
Louisiana Public Health Institute
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Maine Public Health Association
March of Dimes
Mary Ann Liebert Inc.
MaryCatherine Jones Consulting, LLC
Maryland Public Health Association
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Maternal and Child Health Access
Medical IMPACT
Mendocino County Public Health,
Community Wellness
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MindWise Innovations
Minnesota Public Health Association
Missouri Association of Local Public Health
Agencies
Missouri Center for Public Health
Excellence
Missouri Public Health Association
Montana Public Health Association
Montgomery County Department of Health
Mother Lode Democrats of Amador County
MultiCare Connected Care
MultiCare Health System
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association of Chronic Disease
Directors
National Association of County and City
Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of
Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse
Practitioners

National Association of State Emergency
Medical Services Officials
National Association of State and Territorial
AIDS Directors
National Black Nurses Association
National Capital Area Society for Public
Health Education
National Center for Complex Health &
Social Needs, an initiative of the Camden
Coalition
National Environmental Health Association
National Health Care for the Homeless
Council
National Health Law Program
National League for Nursing
National Medical Association
National Network of Public Health Institutes
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
National Prevention Science Coalition to
Improve Lives
National Rural Health Association
Nevada Public Health Association
New Hampshire Public Health Association
New Jersey Public Health Association
New Jersey Society for Public Health
Education
New Mexico Public Health Association
New Progressive Alliance
New York State Public Health Association
North Carolina Society for Public Health
Education
Northern Michigan Community Health
Innovation Region
Ohio Public Health Association
Oklahoma Public Health Association
Partnership for Better Health
Peggy Lillis Foundation
Physicians for Social Responsibility AZ
Chapter
Physicians of Southwest Washington
Positively Nourished LLC
Prevent Blindness
Prevention Access Campaign
Prevention Institute
The Pride Center at Equality Park
Primary Care Development Corporation

Professional Data Analysts
Progressive Democrats of America, Tucson,
AZ Chapter
Public Health Accreditation Board
Public Health Alliance of Southern
California
Public Health Foundation
Public Health Institute
Research!America
Safe States Alliance
Saint Alphonsus Health System
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social
Responsibility
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of
America
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Public Health Education
Society for Women's Health Research
Society of Behavioral Medicine
Sound Generations
Southeastern Michigan Health Association
Southern Nevada Health District
Susan G. Komen

Tennessee Public Health Association
Texas Department of State Health Services
The Wright Centers for Community Health
and Graduate Medical Education
Tigra Pharmaceuticals Inc
Trinity Health
Trust for America's Health
UMW-Greater NJ Chapter
Unite Us
University of Washington School of Public
Health
Utah Public Health Association
Vermont Public Health Association
Washington State Association of Local
Public Health Officials
Washington State Public Health Association
Wayne State University
Wisconsin Association of Local Health
Departments and Boards
Wisconsin Public Health Association
Women's Health Institute
Wyoming Public Health Association

cc: Chair Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee
Ranking Member Richard Burr, Senate HELP Committee
Chair Frank Pallone, House Energy & Commerce Committee
Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers, House Energy & Commerce Committee
Chair Bernie Sanders, Senate Budget Committee
Ranking Member Lindsey Graham, Senate Budget Committee
Chair John Yarmuth, House Budget Committee
Ranking Member Jason Smith, House Budget Committee