

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and
Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Cole, and Ranking Member Murray:

The undersigned organizations, dedicated to protecting the public's health from emergencies and outbreaks, urge you to include **at least \$824,000,000 for the CDC's Public Health Emergency Preparedness Cooperative Agreement (PHEP) and at least \$474,000,000 for ASPR's Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) in the FY2021 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.** It is important to note that these recommendations are for modest increases, given congressional budget caps. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is demonstrating the dire price we are paying for neglecting the public health infrastructure and healthcare preparedness. Our organizations believe a significant, sustained funding increase is needed for PHEP and HPP. Unfortunately, PHEP funding has decreased from \$939 million in FY2003 to \$675 million in FY2020, while HPP has been slashed from \$515 million in FY2003 to \$275 million in FY2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how essential HPP and PHEP are to the public health and healthcare systems' ability to respond quickly and efficiently to emergencies. Public health agencies must be staffed and trained to respond to emerging threats and healthcare organizations must work together to ensure access to medical care as well as to continue operations under strained conditions. In addition to COVID-19, public health and healthcare have responded to record flooding, lung injuries associated with vaping, measles and hepatitis A outbreaks, and multiple natural disasters over the past year. These responses would not be possible without ongoing investment from PHEP and HPP.

The investments from the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Cooperative Agreement (PHEP) created the response systems and infrastructure that enable states, cities and territories to respond to public health emergencies. PHEP has invested in capabilities critical to the COVID-19 response, such as incident management, epidemiological investigation, laboratory testing,

community preparedness and recovery, and medical countermeasures and mitigation. By having staff in place and trained prior to an emergency, public health departments can respond without delay. Although supplemental funding is needed during this pandemic, base PHEP funding allows health departments to hire and retain expert staff.

State and local health departments are attempting to respond to a worldwide pandemic with fewer staff, out-of-date technologies and inadequate laboratory and surveillance capacity. By increasing PHEP funding to at least \$824,000,000 in FY21, public health departments will have an increased capacity to respond to the multiple public health threats they often face at the same time and be more prepared for the large responses necessary for outbreaks such as COVID-19. It will allow them to maintain an emergency preparedness and response workforce that stands ready for the next disaster.

HPP is the only source of federal funding for regional healthcare system preparedness, minimizing the need for supplemental state and federal resources during a disaster. HPP provides funding and technical assistance to every state, four cities and US territories to prepare the healthcare system to respond and recover to events such as COVID-19. The funds build capacity in healthcare coalitions (HCCs) - regional collaborations between healthcare organizations, emergency managers, public health agencies and other private partners – to meet the disaster healthcare needs of communities. The healthcare coalitions allow often competitive healthcare organizations to work together to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. Coalitions may help members share resources, conduct exercises and training, and create situational awareness when it is needed most. During times of disaster, HPP funding allows the healthcare system to weather the storm, recover, and return to normal operations.

Communities are currently feeling the effects of the cuts HPP has endured since 2003. According to the National Health Security Preparedness Index, those cuts have left our healthcare system vulnerable in the case of an emergency: the system has very little medical surge capacity, a critical gap during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to emergency supplemental funding, an increase in FY21 HPP funding to at least \$474,000,000 could allow healthcare facilities to be more prepared for the next outbreak.

We urge you to support the Hospital Preparedness Program and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Cooperative Agreement in FY2021 to allow public health and health care officials can continue to respond to COVID-19 and ensure that we are ready to respond to the next emergency.

Sincerely,

All Youth Access, LLC
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association on Health and Disability
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Public Health Association
America's Blood Centers
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
The Bill Anderson Fund
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Florida Institute for Health Innovation
Georgians for a Healthy Future
Global Biodefense
Health Resources in Action
Healthcare Ready
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
International Association of Emergency Managers
Lakeshore Foundation
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
National Network of Public Health Institutes
New York State Public Health Association
Peggy Lillis Foundation
The Permanente Medical Group-East Bay
The Permanente Medical Group, Northern California, East Bay
Public Health Foundation
Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness GWU
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Society for Public Health Education
SvPrevention
Trust for America's Health
Vaccinate Your Family
Washington State Department of Health