

January XX, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

As organizations committed to improving the public's health, we write to express our serious concern about the most recent continuing resolution, which cut \$750 million from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund) and will put Americans at greater risk for illnesses, injuries and preventable deaths. This represents a 17 percent cut to the Prevention Fund over several years, including an 11 percent cut in fiscal year (FY) 2019. We ask you to reject any additional cuts to the Prevention Fund and restore this lost funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by directing new resources made available by a broader budget agreement to raise the spending caps, or from savings due to the long-term reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), to the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related agencies (LHHS) 302(b) allocation.

The Prevention Fund currently comprises more than 12 percent of CDC's entire annual operating budget. The majority of the programs it funds are core public health programs that existed prior to the creation of the Prevention Fund. As a result, cuts to the Prevention Fund will translate into funding shortfalls in programs that states have long relied upon to keep their residents healthy and safe. Among these programs are the 317 immunization program that protects millions of Americans, public health laboratory grants to identify risks and prevent infectious diseases, the Preventive Health and Health Services (Prevent) Block Grant program which allows states the flexibility to address their most pressing health concerns, cancer screenings, chronic disease prevention and other critically important programs. The Prevention Fund represents 53 percent, 20 percent, and 100 percent of these critical programs' budgets, respectively.

Since FY 2010, CDC's budget authority has actually decreased by 11.4 percent (adjusted for inflation). This cut has occurred in spite of the growing and geographically disparate burden of largely preventable health threats such as the opioid epidemic and emerging infectious disease outbreaks such as the Zika virus.

CHIP, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), National Health Service Corps, the Special Diabetes Program and other important programs are critical to ensuring that Americans have access to health care and to improving equity in health outcomes. However, cutting CDC funding undermines the core missions of those programs, as CDC activities supported by the Prevention Fund work in concert with primary care providers to keep Americans healthy. These are separate and distinct sets of activities that work together to protect the health of Americans.

Programs funded through the LHHS appropriations bill, including public health, education, and job training programs funded with non-defense discretionary dollars, have been cut dramatically and disproportionately in recent years as Congress has worked to reduce spending. Yet experts across the political spectrum agree these programs are not a driving factor behind our nation's mid- and long term deficit challenges. The recent cut to the Prevention Fund further exacerbates these budget reductions. Instead of pitting CDC funding against other important health priorities, Congress should significantly increase its investment in CDC to ensure that we have the resources required to address the health challenges facing the nation.

Funding prevention not only saves lives but it saves money. A comprehensive study of evidence-based prevention programs found that every dollar invested yields \$5.60 in savings. Further cuts to public health funding will likely cause children and families to become sicker and our nation's health care costs to grow even faster. Congress must begin to reverse the trend of cutting CDC's budget and significantly increase investments in the agency to ensure the federal, state, and local public health professionals have the skills and resources they need to protect and further improve the health of the American people. As Congress works toward a budget agreement, we urge you to restore these cuts to CDC's budget to ensure that CDC maintains its ability to carry out its mission of saving lives and improving health.

Sincerely,