

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,<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> while state health agencies lost nearly 10 percent of full-time equivalent staff since 2012.<sup>3</sup> 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,

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>2</sup> 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>

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century health threats using 20<sup>th</sup> 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

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<sup>4</sup> 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