

July 1, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

Our organizations have been directly involved in the fight against the coronavirus (COVID-19) – from serving on the frontlines, to working with policymakers to make evidence-based decisions, and to collecting and sharing data. We are deeply concerned about increasing reports of resistance to evidence-based public health messages and threats to public health leaders and agencies. Such actions undermine the efforts to protect the health and wellbeing of America’s residents at a critical juncture when cases of COVID-19 are rising.

At this sentinel moment, we urge you to affirm the invaluable role of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and resist any efforts that would undermine its mission. Similarly, we stand in solidarity with the local, tribal, and territorial public health agencies as they strive to provide guidance in how to re-open safely, avoid preventable deaths and decrease the likelihood of a second major shutdown on the economy.

CDC, state, local, tribal, and territorial public health staff have been working around the clock for months to respond to the pandemic and protect the public, while often relying on overworked staff and inadequate systems that are the result of decades of underfunding.<sup>1</sup> The United States spends an estimated \$3.6 trillion annually on health, but less than three percent of that spending is directed toward public health and prevention.<sup>2, 3</sup> And, public health spending as a proportion of total health spending has been decreasing since 2000 and falling in inflation-adjusted terms since the Great Recession.<sup>4</sup> CDC’s core budget remains inadequate to meet the nation’s public health needs. While emergency supplemental funding has been critical to begin to address the immediate COVID needs, robust, sustained, and predictable funding for its full public health mission is essential to sustain its core public health activities and work to prevent the next emergency.

Underfunding CDC has a direct impact on the public health agencies in states and local communities that rely on federal funding from the CDC. While some funding also comes from

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<sup>1</sup> Farberman, RK, McKillop M, Lieberman DA, et al. *The Impact of Chronic Underfunding on America’s Public Health System: Trends, Risks, and Recommendations*, 2020. <https://www.tfah.org/report-details/publichealthfunding2020/> (accessed June 30, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> National Health Expenditures Accounts. In *Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services*, 2018. <https://www.cms.gov/researchstatistics-data-and-systems/statistics-trendsand-reports/nationalhealthexpenddata/nationalhealthaccountshistorical> (accessed March 14, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Himmelstein DU and Woolhandler S. “Public Health’s Falling Share of US Health Spending.” *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(1): 56-57, 2016. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302908> (accessed March 14, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

state and local sources, federal funds are critical for states and communities to help reach our national goals of a safer and healthier population. Moreover, funds from state and local governments are incredibly sensitive to economic shifts and are very likely to shrink further as a result of the current economic outlook.

The broad scope of CDC's work – from chronic disease to injury prevention to environmental health to emergency preparedness to infectious disease – is critical. It is not possible to effectively meet the needs of the American people if that scope is narrowed. We have seen how many chronic diseases and conditions that afflict Americans, such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes, have increased the risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19. The pandemic has also starkly highlighted the unacceptable health disparities related to racism and discrimination which can only be addressed with a sweeping, rather than a narrow, health focus.

CDC, along with the White House, the Department of Health and Human Services, state and local health departments have made some missteps in their response to COVID-19 which should be acknowledged and learned from. After the global pandemic we must work collaboratively to modernize CDC and the entire public health system while at the same time ensuring it has the funding and support necessary to do so.

Nonetheless, CDC continues to be the world's premiere public health institution and should be treated as such during this pandemic. It is a scientific organization that functions best as an apolitical agency trusted to guide the strategy of our nation to be healthier and safer. We must amplify the unfettered voice of CDC, not stifle it. The core mission of the CDC is clear, and it is replicated in every state, local, tribal and territorial public health agency: prevent illness and injury and save lives. Now more than ever we need them to accomplish their mission.

Secretary Azar, the health of all Americans is at stake. We urge you to speak up and amplify the critical role of CDC and that of all public health agencies during this monumental crisis.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days

Academic Health Resource

Academy for Eating Disorders

Action on Smoking and Health

Advocates for Better Children's Diets

AES Consulting

AFSCME

AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families

AIDS United

AlohaCare

Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance of WI

Alzheimer's Association

Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM)

Alzheimer's of Central Alabama

Alzheimer's Orange County

American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Academy of Pediatrics, California  
American Association for Clinical Chemistry  
American Association for Dental Research  
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)  
American College Health Association  
American College of Clinical Pharmacy  
American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP)  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American Council on Exercise  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Heart Association  
American Kidney Fund  
American Lung Association  
American Medical Women's Association  
American Organization for Nursing Leadership  
American Public Health Association  
American School Health Association  
American Sexual Health Association  
American Society for Clinical Pathology  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society of Hematology  
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology  
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene  
American Thoracic Society  
American University Department of Health Studies  
APLA Health  
Arizona Community Health Workers Association  
Arizona Public Health Association  
Art & Science of Health Promotion Institute  
Asian Health Coalition  
Asian Health Services  
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association of American Cancer Institutes  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)  
Association of Food and Drug Officials  
Association of Immunization Managers

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools  
Association of Ohio Health Commissioners  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Big Cities Health Coalition  
Bipartisan Policy Center  
Black AIDS Institute  
Black Men's Health Initiative  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Bristol Health Equity Zone  
Bronx Health REACH  
California Coalition for Children's Safety and Health  
California Immunization Coalition  
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network  
California School Nurses Organization  
Cambridge Public Health Department  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Cancer Council of the Pacific Islands  
Caring Ambassadors Program  
Cascade AIDS Project  
Center for Community Resilience  
Center for Health and Learning  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
Ceres Community Project  
ChangeLab Solutions  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Children's Mental Health Network  
Christian Council of Delmarva  
City of Houston Health Department  
City of Milwaukee of Health Department  
Climate for Health, ecoAmerica  
Coalition for a Tobacco Free Arkansas  
Coalition of National Health Education Organizations  
Cohen Veterans Bioscience  
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials  
Colorado Public Health Association  
Colorado Public Health Nursing Leaders  
Community Access National Network

Community Education Group  
Connecticut Public Health Association  
Cooley's Anemia Foundation  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Counter Tools  
County Health Executives Association of California  
Cuyahoga County Board of Health  
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation  
Delaware Academy of Medicine  
Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association  
Delaware Academy of Medicine and the Delaware Public Health Association  
East Shore District Health Dept.  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
Education Development Center  
Element Health, Inc.  
Endocrine Society  
Enlace Chicago  
Epilepsy Alliance America  
Equality California  
Eta Sigma Gamma  
Families USA  
Family Voices  
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Information Network  
FHI 360  
FIRST Family Service Center  
Fletcher Group, Inc.  
Florida Institute for Health Innovation  
Florida Public Health Association  
Foundation for Healthy Generations  
Galaxy Aviation Corp  
Gateway Region YMCA  
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
Global Health Council  
Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC)  
Global Healthy Living Foundation  
Global Liver Institute  
Grand Traverse County Health Department  
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative  
Harm Reduction Michigan  
Hawaii Public Health Association  
Hawaii State Dept of Health, Office of Primary Care and Rural Health  
Health by Design  
Health Care Improvement Foundation  
Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO)

Health Resources in Action  
Healthcare Foundation Northern Sonoma County  
Healthcare Ready  
HealthHIV  
HealthPartners Institute  
Healthy Schools Campaign  
Healthy Weight Partnership Inc.  
Heartland Alliance  
Hep B United  
Hepatitis B Foundation  
HIV Medicine Association  
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health  
Hope and Help Center of Central Florida, Inc.  
Idaho Public Health Association  
Immunization Action Coalition  
Immunize Nevada  
Impetus - Let's Get Started LLC  
Indiana Public Health Association  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
Institute for Family Health  
Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science (IAPHS)  
International Association of Emergency Managers  
International Association of Fire Chiefs  
IWC Resources, LP  
Jeffrey Modell Foundation  
Journal of Public Health Management and Practice  
Jump IN for Healthy Kids  
Kaplan Health Innovations  
Kentucky Health Departments Association  
KidsAndCars.org  
Lakeshore Foundation  
League of American Bicyclists  
Linn County Public Health  
Louisiana Community Health Worker Outreach Network  
Louisiana Public Health Association  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.  
Macoupin County Public Health Department  
Maine Public Health Association  
March of Dimes  
MaryCatherine Jones Consulting, LLC  
Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO)  
Maryland Office of Minority Health  
Massachusetts Public Health Association  
Medicago  
MEND Foundation  
Metropolitan Group

Michigan Association for Local Public Health  
MindWise Innovations  
Minneapolis Health Department  
Mississippi Public Health Institute  
Montana Public Health Association  
Monterey County Health Department  
Morehouse School of Medicine  
MountainCare  
Multnomah County Health Department  
NAPHSIS  
NASTAD  
National Adult Day Services Association  
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
National Association of Community Health Workers  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of School Nurses  
National Athletic Trainers' Association  
National Birth Equity Collaborative  
National Center for Disaster Preparedness, Columbia University  
National Center for Healthy Housing  
National Coalition for LGBT Health  
National Coalition for the Homeless  
National Coalition of STD Directors  
National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)  
National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention  
National Hemophilia Foundation  
National Kidney Foundation  
National Lipid Association  
National Medical Association (NMA)  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives  
National REACH Coalition  
National Safety Council  
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable  
National WIC Association  
Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors  
Network for Environmental & economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ  
Nevada Public Health Organization  
Nevada Rural Hospital Partners  
New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials  
New Jersey Public Health Association  
New York State Public Health Association  
North Carolina Healthcare Foundation  
Northwest Center for Public Health Practice

NYU Grossman School of Medicine  
NYU School of Global Public Health  
Ohio Public Health Association  
Onyx Strategic Consulting LLC  
Pacific Island Health Officers Association  
Partnering for Community Transformation Inc  
Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease  
Partnership to Fight Infectious Disease  
PATH  
Patrick Risha CTE Awareness Foundation  
Pawtucket Central Falls Health Equity Zone  
Peggy Lillis Foundation  
Pennsylvania Public Health Association  
PFLAG National  
Population Association of America  
Population Health Alliance  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevent Child Abuse America  
Prevention Institute  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
Public Health Advocates  
Public Health Alliance of Southern California  
Public Health Foundation  
Public Health Institute  
Public Health Law Center  
Public Health Solutions  
Puerto Rico Public Health Association  
Pulmonary Hypertension Association  
Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness GWU  
Research!America  
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium  
Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies  
Respiratory Health Association  
Rhode Island Department of Health  
RiverStone Health  
RiverStone Health  
Rural Health Association of Tennessee  
Rural Health Association of Utah  
Safe Routes Partnership  
Safe States Alliance  
Samueli Integrative Health Programs  
SANIPLAN  
School-Based Health Alliance  
SF Hep B Free - Bay Area  
SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators  
Shoals Community Clinic



Silver State Equality-Nevada  
Smoke Free St. Joe  
Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Society for Public Health Education  
Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education  
Southern California Public Health Association  
Southwick BOH  
Stanislaus County Medical Society  
Susan G. Komen  
Tennessee Justice Center  
Tennessee Public Health Association  
Texas Public Health Association  
The AIDS Institute  
The Broussard Company  
The Center for Community Resilience, George Washington University  
The Consortium  
The Foundation for Sustainable Communities  
The George Washington University (GW) Cancer Center  
The Gerontological Society of America  
The Immunization Partnership  
The John A. Hartford Foundation  
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health  
The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc  
The Nourished Principles, LLC  
The Permanente Medical Group  
Thomas Jefferson University  
Training Resources Network, Inc.  
Treatment Action Group  
Trust for America's Health  
Truth Initiative  
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee  
UCLA Fielding School of Public Health  
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health  
United Ostomy Associations of America  
United Way of Greenwood and Abbeville Counties  
University of Washington Department of Global Health  
University of Washington School of Nursing  
University of Washington School of Public Health  
University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute  
Vaccinate Your Family  
Washington State Association of Local Health Officials  
Washington State Department of Health  
Washington State Public Health Association  
WelCore Health, LLC  
West Valley Neighborhoods Coalition

Whitefoord  
Winer Family Foundation  
Wisconsin Public Health Association  
Women Of A Certain Age  
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease  
Women's Resource Center  
Woodhull Freedom Foundation  
Xavier University for Population Health  
YMCA of the USA  
Zell Community Health Strategies