

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 Dental Association  
 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 Departments of Family Medicine  
 Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors  
 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  
Epilepsy Foundation  
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  
L.A. Care Health Plan  
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  
NAACP  
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 American Primary Care Research Group  
 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  
 Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies  
 Respiratory Health Association  
 Rhode Island Department of 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  
 Society of Teachers of Family Medicine  
 Southern California Public Health Association  
 Southwick Board of Health  
 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 Kennedy Forum  
 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  
Trillium Health  
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  
UsAgainstAlzheimer's  
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