

September 20, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &  
Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &  
Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

As organizations committed to improving and protecting the public's health, we write to express our serious concern regarding language in the Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act that would cut \$980 million from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund). This will put Americans at greater risk for illnesses, injuries, and preventable deaths. We ask you to reject any cuts to the Prevention Fund as you work to reauthorize health programs.

The nation can no longer afford to underfund public health. In addition to losing more than one million Americans to COVID-19, the pandemic will likely have cost the U.S. economy \$14 trillion.<sup>1</sup> The nation spends more than \$4.3 trillion annually on health, yet only about 4.4 percent of that total represents spending on public health and prevention.<sup>2</sup> Despite spending more than any other high-income nation on treating disease, the U.S. has substantially worse health outcomes, with life expectancy declining in recent years.<sup>3</sup> Now is the time to invest in public health and prevention.

The Prevention Fund currently comprises more than 10 percent of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) entire annual operating budget. 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. In its first 14 years (FY2010-23), the Prevention Fund has invested more than \$12.3 billion in resources to states, localities, and tribal and community organizations in support of critical prevention and public health programs. These investments include the 317 immunization program that enables prevention of outbreaks, epidemiologists and public health laboratory grants in every state and territory to detect and investigate outbreaks and prevent further infections, the Preventive Health and Health Services (Prevent) Block Grant that enables states and localities to address their most pressing health concerns, supporting cancer screenings, and other critically important programs. Across the U.S. Department of Health and Human

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<sup>1</sup> T Walmsley et al. Macroeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, *Economic Modelling*, Vol. 120, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2022.106147>.

<sup>2</sup> The Impact of Chronic Underfunding on America's Public Health System. Trust for America's Health, 2023. [TFAH-2023-PublicHealthFundingFINALc.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> [U.S. Health Care from a Global Perspective, 2022 | Commonwealth Fund](#)

Services, the Prevention Fund supports programs such as suicide prevention, Alzheimer's disease prevention, and chronic disease self-management.

Funding prevention not only saves lives, but it also saves money. The Prevention Fund's Tips from Former Smokers Campaign alone saved an estimated \$7.3 billion in smoking-related healthcare costs from 2012 to 2018 and helped more than one million Americans quit smoking for good. Public health funding has not kept up with the range of threats that public health must address. For many of these conditions, we know what works, but public health does not have the resources to address these growing health threats.

The Prevention Fund has already been cut by nearly \$13 billion from FY2013-2029. These cuts do not just threaten CDC's budget, but also the ability of Appropriators to maintain funding for the entire Labor-HHS Appropriations bill. As the Committee works toward reauthorizing health programs, we urge you to avoid cuts to the Prevention Fund and ensure that CDC and public health programs across the country can carry out their mission of saving lives and improving health.

Sincerely,

ADAP Advocacy  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American College of Clinical Pharmacy  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American College of Sports Medicine  
American Heart Association  
American Lung Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society on Aging  
American Statistical Association  
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Immunization Managers  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Pathology Chairs  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Big Cities Health Coalition  
CAEAR Coalition  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of Elders (CARIE)  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Christian Council of Delmarva  
City-County Health District  
Colorado Public Health Association  
Community Access National Network  
Connecticut Public Health Association  
Cook County Department of Public Health  
Dorchester County Health Department  
Early Impact Virginia  
Endocrine Society  
Eta Sigma Gamma  
Foundation for Healthy Generations  
Futures Without Violence  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality  
GO2 for Lung Cancer  
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, Inc  
Health Promotion Consultants  
Healthy Weight Partnership Inc.  
HIV Medicine Association  
HLN Consulting, LLC  
Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness  
Immunize.org  
Institute for Public Health Innovation  
International WELL Building Institute  
Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security  
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition  
Kentucky Voices for Health  
Kids and Car Safety  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Linn County Public Health  
Maine Public Health Association  
March of Dimes  
Marked By Covid  
MaryCatherine Jones Consulting, LLC  
Mel Leaman Free Clinic  
Mental Health America  
Minnesota Public Health Association  
NASTAD  
National Alliance of Public Health Students and Alums

National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence  
National Center for Healthy Housing  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Prevention Science Coalition  
Nemours Children's Health  
New Jersey Public Health Association  
New York State Public Health Association  
Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials  
Peggy Lillis Foundation  
Pennsylvania Public Health Association  
Population Association of America  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevent Blindness Georgia  
Prevent Blindness Ohio  
Prevent Blindness Wisconsin  
Prevent Child Abuse America  
Prevention Institute  
Public Health Foundation  
Public Health Institute  
Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness  
Resolve to Save Lives  
RiverStone Health  
Safe States Alliance  
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Society for Public Health Education  
Society for Women's Health Research  
Sound Generations  
Sound Generations - Project Enhance  
Spina Bifida Association  
Task Force for Global Health  
The 317 Coalition  
The Foundation for Sustainable Communities  
The Gerontological Society of America  
Trust for America's Health  
USAging  
Vaccinate Your Family  
Voices for Vaccines  
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials

Washington State Public Health Association  
Well-Being and Equity in the World  
Wisconsin Public Health Association  
YMCA of the USA

cc: The Honorable Charles Schumer, Senate Majority Leader  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Roger Marshall, Senate HELP Committee  
The Honorable Patty Murray, Senate Appropriations Committee Chair  
The Honorable Susan Collins, Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member