



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

*For science. For action. For health.*

## **APHA 2023 advocacy priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and the Biden administration**

The mission of the American Public Health Association is to improve the health of the public and achieve equity in health status. To realize this mission, APHA will work with members of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and the Biden administration to promote and adopt policies that protect and strengthen public health systems for all communities and populations.

**Increase and protect funding for vital public health agencies and programs and strengthen the nation's public health infrastructure.** Congress and the Biden administration must prioritize funding for the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration](#). These two agencies are the backbone of our federal public health system and provide valuable resources to our nation's state and local health departments as well as the health professionals who work to keep our nation healthy and address the health inequities that exist in the U.S. APHA strongly urges Congress and the administration to increase investments in these important health agencies and programs by working in a bipartisan manner to prioritize public health funding in the FY 2024 appropriations process. Congress should also ensure that any additional needed funding is made available to assist the nation's public health and health care infrastructure in their efforts to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

APHA also urges support for two important proposals to strengthen the nation's public health infrastructure and workforce, including the creation of a mandatory funding stream for core public health infrastructure activities at CDC and state, local, tribal and territorial public health departments. The [Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act](#) would establish this funding to support essential activities such as disease surveillance, epidemiology, laboratory capacity, all-hazards preparedness and response; policy development and support; communications; community partnership development; and organizational competencies. A reliable, long-term funding stream for these activities is essential for anticipating and responding to future public health emergencies.

**Uphold the Affordable Care Act and expand access to health coverage and services.** Millions of Americans are reaping the benefits of the ACA through expanded coverage, coverage of preventative care, a prohibition on discriminating against people with pre-existing conditions, an extension of dependent coverage for adult children up to age 26 and progress in closing the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap. APHA strongly supported the American Rescue Plan Act and the Inflation Reduction Act which made health coverage more affordable by expanding access to health insurance premium tax credits to millions of individuals. Support for the Prevention and Public Health Fund, the mandatory fund for public health and prevention activities created by the ACA, is an important component of improving the nation's health and well-being. Through CDC, the fund is providing critical resources to help states keep communities healthy and safe. APHA continues to oppose any effort to repeal or weaken the ACA or the prevention fund, including efforts to redirect funds away from their intended use. APHA is committed to working with Congress and the Biden administration to further expand health insurance to the millions of individuals who still lack coverage and access to critical health services.

**Address the health impacts of climate change.** Climate change and extreme weather events are threatening our health today, and if left unchecked, will lead to increases in disease and death. Immediate action can and must be taken to slow climate change and prepare the public health system to protect our communities from the negative health impacts associated with climate change. Vulnerable populations —

such as communities of color, the elderly, young children, the sick and the poor — bear the greatest burden of disease and death related to climate change. Funding provided through the Inflation Reduction Act will help speed the transition of our energy and transportation sectors away from fossil fuels and towards clean, safe and renewable energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by about 40% by 2030. Specifically, the law includes \$370 billion in funding for long-term tax credits and other incentives for clean energy, home energy efficiency, clean transportation, an extension of tax credits for electric vehicles, investments to support clean energy manufacturing and other investments to decarbonize the U.S. economy. Importantly, it will also reduce methane emissions through new fees on methane emissions from the oil and gas sectors and will also provide resources to monitor methane emissions and support underserved communities impacted by methane pollution. APHA also urges Congress to ensure our federal, state and local health departments and agencies have the resources and tools they need to address these challenges by [increasing funding CDC's Climate and Health Program](#) and supporting other efforts to address the negative public health impacts of climate change. APHA strongly supports both Congressional and agency action to address climate change by cleaning up major sources of pollution in the power, transportation and other sectors.

**Protect access to reproductive health care.** The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has had a devastating impact on access to reproductive health care in states across the country. In 2022, more than 430 bills were introduced in state legislatures to restrict access to abortion, including bills on pre-viability abortion bans, crisis pregnancy center funding and medication-assisted abortion restrictions. At least 43 of these bills were enacted. Eight states enacted trigger bans to automatically ban abortion if the federal right was overturned, bringing the total number of states with trigger laws to 13. Evidence tells us that access to safe abortion is a key factor in preventing deaths and disability among pregnant people due to pregnancy-related causes. These state-level attacks that restrict abortion access lead to worse pregnancy-related health outcomes, further health equity gaps by race, ethnicity, income and location, and increase the economic costs associated with exacerbated inequity. APHA urges Congress to pass the [Women's Health Protection Act](#), which would create a statutory right at the federal level for abortion providers to provide abortion care and for patients to receive it, invalidating state-level attacks and protecting the right to abortion. APHA also urges Congress to strengthen funding in FY 2024 for programs that support reproductive health services at the community level like the Title X family planning program.

**Pass a 2023 Farm Bill to protect nutrition security.** The Supplemental Nutrition Access Program has a critical role in improving the health of people across the nation, especially among the most vulnerable Americans. SNAP makes a positive difference over the life course of individuals, decreasing negative health outcomes in children and increasing economic self-sufficiency in women. Despite progress, however, hunger continues to affect too many people in the U.S. In 2021, more than 33.8 million Americans lived in households that struggled against food insecurity. To continue addressing nutrition insecurity and supporting vulnerable families, the 2023 Farm Bill must protect and strengthen access to SNAP, strengthen the program's benefit levels, improve equitable access and reduce barriers to eligibility, invest in nutrition research and education, and address nutrition security by improving the food environment to increase equitable access to healthy food.

**Protect nutrition standards for children.** School meals are a key source of nutrition for many kids. Over the past decade, schools and the food industry have made great progress in ensuring that schools offer kids healthy meals that meet science-based nutrition standards. A 2021 study found that school meals are the single most healthy source of nutrition for children. Furthermore, school meals play a role in fighting food insecurity - for many children participating in the program, school breakfast and lunch are the only meals they receive that day. To continue building on this progress, APHA is urging Congress to include provisions in any Child Nutrition Reauthorization that would align school nutrition standards with the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including improved standards on added sugars, sodium and whole grains. APHA also urges the U.S. Department of Agriculture to include these standards when proposing and finalizing any child nutrition rulemaking.

**Uphold and strengthen critical public health laws and regulations and reverse damaging rollbacks.** APHA opposes any efforts to weaken or roll back important regulations and laws such as the Clean Air

Act that protect the public’s health, including legislation that would weaken the process for developing evidence-based public health regulations. APHA urges the Biden administration, through the Environmental Protection Agency, to propose a strong rule to reduce carbon emissions from power plants. APHA is pleased the administration has restored the “appropriate and necessary” finding of the Mercury and Air Toxics standards and now calls on the agency to also strengthen these important public health standards, as it reviews the latest scientific evidence to protect the health of all communities, particularly our children. APHA also urges the administration to finalize strong rules to protect the public from exposure to dangerous ozone and particulate matter pollution.

**Address the nation’s gun violence epidemic.** In 2021, more than 47,000 people died as a result of gun violence. APHA is extremely pleased that in FY 2023, Congress provided \$25 million to the CDC and the National Institutes of Health for vital gun violence prevention research and we urge Congress to include \$35 million for CDC and \$25 million for NIH in FY 2024. A sound public health approach to address this epidemic begins with understanding the science behind the problem. Research is an essential function to achieve this understanding to make data-backed policy and programmatic decisions, and we must continue to provide [and increase the level of these critical resources](#). APHA also calls on Congress to take up legislation to require [universal background checks](#) for all firearm purchases in the U.S. and for Congress to pass legislation that allows the removal of firearms from those deemed potentially harmful to themselves or others through the issuance of extreme risk protection orders.

For more information on APHA’s advocacy priorities, visit <https://www.apha.org/advocacy> or contact Don Hoppert at [Donald.Hoppert@apha.org](mailto:Donald.Hoppert@apha.org) or Jordan Wolfe at [Jordan.Wolfe@apha.org](mailto:Jordan.Wolfe@apha.org).

The American Public Health Association champions the health of all people and all communities. We strengthen the public health profession. We speak out for public health issues and policies backed by science. We are the only organization that combines a 150-year perspective, a broad-based member community and the ability to influence federal policy to improve the public’s health. Learn more at [www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org).