

Our goal as public health advocates is to speak for health and demonstrate the importance of public health in communities around the nation. The following questions are designed to help start conversations about public health issues with policymakers at the local, state and federal levels. These sample questions cover APHA's advocacy priorities: public health funding; the Affordable Care Act; the Prevention and Public Health Fund; health impacts of climate change; and gun violence prevention.

The questions can be tailored to highlight local issues by providing local examples, your area of interest or expertise and concerns.

Note that the lists provided with certain questions are not exhaustive. Pick examples relevant to you and your community.

PUBLIC HEALTH FUNDING

1. I am concerned about the future of our state and local public health workforce because of the vital services they provide in our state and communities. These services include (*Fill in with relevant services for your community — see list below for examples*). Are you familiar with the public health programs that are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration in (*name of community/city/state*)? Will you pledge to support increased funding for these agencies and programs and oppose any future efforts to restrain or cut this important funding?
 - a. *Disease and injury prevention activities*
 - b. *Public health workers*
 - c. *Public health laboratories*
 - d. *Personnel at state and local health departments*
 - e. *Safety net for uninsured/assuring access to care*
 - f. *Cancer screening*
 - g. *Vaccine delivery programs*
 - h. *Tobacco prevention programs*
 - i. *Protecting the public from environmental toxins and other exposures*
 - j. *Food safety*
 - k. *Maternal and child health care programs*

2. Last year, Congress passed a FY 2020 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill that contained important increases in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration. Yet even with these increases, both agencies remain woefully underfunded. These agencies provide funding for programs like *(Fill in with relevant programs for your community — see list below for examples)*. How can we reduce the economic and health-related costs of chronic and communicable disease and injuries when our nation is not investing in programs that prevent and treat these problems? Will you oppose future cuts to these critical programs? Will you commit to working with your House and Senate colleagues to support additional increases for CDC and HRSA in this year's FY 2021 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill?
 - a. *Access to care in rural communities*
 - b. *Obesity and tobacco use prevention*
 - c. *Infectious disease detection and response*
 - d. *Emergency preparedness and response*
 - e. *Health professions training and education*
 - f. *Health education and outreach*

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The Affordable Care Act has helped millions of people gain affordable health coverage and is helping to shift our health care system from one that focuses on treating the sick to one that focuses on keeping people healthy. Unfortunately, the ACA has come under attack by some in Congress, and there have been multiple attempts to repeal the law. Additionally, the Trump administration has undertaken numerous efforts to weaken the law through the regulatory process and is currently seeking to have the entire ACA invalidated in the courts. Fortunately, the House of Representatives has passed two bills that would strengthen the ACA and overturn efforts by the administration to undermine the law:

1. [H.R. 986, the Protecting Americans with Pre-existing Conditions Act of 2019](#), would revoke the Trump administration's recent guidance allowing states to seek waivers that threaten protections for people with pre-existing conditions. While the ACA made clear that access to health insurance should not be contingent on an individual's health status, the administration has made great efforts to weaken crucial protections for people with pre-existing conditions. This new guidance would undermine ACA protections for people with pre-existing conditions by making it more costly and more difficult for this vulnerable population to obtain coverage.
2. [H.R. 987, the Strengthening Health Care and Lowering Prescription Drug Costs Act](#), would strengthen access to comprehensive and affordable health care, including:
 - Reinstating funding for consumer outreach, educational assistance, and the navigator program to help consumers understand their health care options and select the coverage that best fits their financial and medical needs.
 - Rescinding the administration's final rule that allowed for greater use and promotion of short-term health plans. These plans are not subject to the ACA's consumer protections, including protections for people with pre-existing conditions, and the requirement that

plans cover essential health benefits, such as maternity care, prescription drugs and substance use disorder services.

- Providing states with funding to establish their own marketplaces, which would grant states the flexibility to transition from the federal exchange to their own state-based health exchanges. This would allow states to offer options tailored to their population's needs and to control their own enrollment period.

Will you commit to working with your colleagues in a bipartisan manner to oppose any future efforts in Congress or by the administration to weaken or repeal the ACA and to support efforts to strengthen the ACA through legislation like H.R. 986 and H.R. 987? Can I also count on you to work to further expand health insurance coverage to the more than 28 million people who remain uninsured?

PREVENTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH FUND

1. It's been said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The [Prevention and Public Health Fund](#) provides much-needed mandatory funding for programs at the local, state and federal levels to fight obesity, curb tobacco use, increase immunization rates, prevent childhood lead poisoning, increase access to preventive care services and help state and local governments respond to public health threats and outbreaks. Do you support maintaining funding for the prevention fund?
2. The Prevention and Public Health Fund was designed to increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life and has funded important programs to *(Fill in with relevant examples — see list below for some options)*. Unfortunately, Congress has passed legislation to cut or redirect the fund many times in the past – preventing the fund from growing to its originally intended level. Protecting the prevention fund from further cuts is essential to ensuring a strong and healthy nation by improving the public's health and restraining the rate of growth in health care costs. Will you take action to protect this important fund now and in the future?
 - a. *Promote tobacco-free living*
 - b. *Encourage healthy eating*
 - c. *Prevent childhood lead poisoning*
 - d. *Detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks*
 - e. *Expand access to breast and cervical cancer screenings*
 - f. *Prevent suicide*
 - g. *Increase child immunization rates*
 - h. *Prevent falls among older adults and adults with disabilities*
3. I strongly support H.R. 3447/S. 1944, the [Public Health Funding Restoration Act](#), a bill that will restore funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund to its originally intended level beginning in FY 2020. Support for the Prevention Fund will help expand and strengthen critical prevention and public health activities that improve our nation's health and help reduce health care costs. Can I count on you to cosponsor and support this legislation to restore this much needed public health funding?

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

1. The [fourth National Climate Assessment](#), which was completed in 2018, details the health impacts of climate change in the United States and notes, “The health and well-being of Americans are already affected by climate change, with the adverse health consequences projected to worsen with additional climate change. Climate change affects human health by altering exposures to heat waves, floods, droughts, and other extreme events; vector-borne, food-borne and water-borne infectious diseases; changes in the quality and safety of air, food, and water; and stresses to mental health and well-being.” Will you heed this clear scientific evidence and pledge to work with your colleagues to take steps now to reduce pollution that drives climate change and harms health?
2. The responsibility to protect the public from the health threats of climate change will fall largely on our nation’s state, local, territorial and tribal health departments. We need to invest additional resources in programs like [CDC’s Climate and Health Program](#), which provides resources to health departments to prepare for and respond to the specific health impacts of climate change that threaten their communities. Will you support providing additional funding for this important program in FY 2021?
3. H.R. 1243/S. 523, the [Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act](#), would also help our nation address the serious health threats associated with climate change. The bill would require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop a national strategic action plan for addressing the public health impacts of climate change. The bill would enhance forecasting and modeling, track environmental and disease data and expand the science base to better understand the relationship between climate change and health outcomes. Importantly, the legislation would prioritize activities to address the health impacts of climate change, including preparedness planning, surveillance, education and training in order to ensure that our already-overburdened state and local public health workforce can adequately address the health impacts of climate change while continuing to respond to other ongoing threats and challenges. Will you co-sponsor and support this legislation?

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

1. For the first time in more than 20 years, Congress provided funding in the final FY 2020 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill for both CDC and the National Institutes of Health to conduct firearm injury and mortality prevention research. The bill provides CDC and NIH with \$12.5 million each for this research. Can I count on your support for continued funding for these agencies to conduct gun violence research in the FY 2021 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill?
2. Gun violence is one of the nation's leading preventable causes of death. In 2017, more than 39,000 individuals died as a result of gun violence, and thousands more suffered nonfatal injuries. After years of delay, it is time for Congress to act and take a comprehensive public health approach to addressing this growing crisis. Current law, which only requires background checks for guns purchased from federally licensed dealers, is inadequate and contains significant gaps that provide easy access to weapons for felons, domestic abusers, the seriously mentally ill and others prohibited from owning firearms. I support [H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act](#), that would require a federal background check for all gun purchases, including those at gun shows, on the internet and through classified ads. Can I count on your support for this important legislation?



The American Public Health Association champions the health of all people and all communities. We are the only organization that combines a nearly 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.

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