

# Legislative Update



**April 2019**

- 1. APHA opposes president's budget, urges Congress to increase public health funding**
- 2. APHA calls for increased allocation for health spending bill and urges Congress to raise spending caps for discretionary programs**
- 3. APHA supports legislation to strengthen protections for pre-existing conditions and lower health care costs**
- 4. Legislation addresses the health impacts of climate change**
- 5. APHA opposes administration's proposed rule to weaken the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**
- 6. Registration opens for APHA's second annual Speak for Health Advocacy Bootcamp**

## **APHA opposes president's budget, urges Congress to increase public health funding**

On March 11, President Trump released his [FY 2020 budget request](#). Once again, the administration is proposing deep cuts to critical public health agencies and programs. The president's budget proposes cutting more than \$750 million from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) below current funding levels, including a \$52 million reduction to environmental health programs, complete elimination of CDC's Climate and Health program, a \$68 million reduction in immunization programs, a \$237 million cut to chronic disease programs and a \$146 million cut to occupational safety and health programs. The proposal would cut the [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) by \$1 billion below current levels including a \$792 million cut to health workforce programs, \$129 million cut to rural health programs, and a \$144 million cut to maternal and child health programs. The budget proposal also calls for cutting \$2.5 billion, or 23% reduction, to the Environmental Protection Agency and an \$82 million reduction for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. APHA [issued a statement](#) following the release of the budget proposal outlining its concerns and urging Congress to reject the proposed cuts to important public health programs.

APHA and other advocates are urging Congress to provide increased funding to both CDC and HRSA in FY 2020. APHA took the lead through the CDC Coalition in sending letters to House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee leaders urging them to provide [\\$7.8 billion for CDC](#) and [\\$8.56 billion for HRSA](#) in FY 2020. In addition, APHA has weighed in to support funding on a variety of other public health programs and agencies including:

- [Health organization letter](#) to leaders of the House Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee in support of fully funding public health workforce programs administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration
- [Health organization letter](#) supporting increased funding for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in the FY 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill
- [Health organization letter](#) to leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees requesting report language to bar the relocation of the Economic Research Services and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the reorganization of the ERS
- [Health organization letter](#) requesting increased funding for CDC's Climate and Health Program in FY 2020
- [Public health organization letter](#) to Senate Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies appropriations subcommittee leaders in support of a strong allocation of funds to support the Food and Drug Administration's efforts to reduce tobacco use in the U.S.
- [Health organization letter to House and Senate Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee leaders](#) in support of greater funding levels for the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant in FY 2020
- [Health organization letter to House and Senate Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee leaders](#) in support of increased funding for CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health program in FY 2020
- Health organization letter to the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee leaders requesting a strong funding level for the Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality in FY 2020
- [Health organization letter to House Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee members](#) urging strong investments in the Title X family program in FY 2020
- Public health organization letter to [House](#) and [Senate](#) Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee leaders in support of increased funding for CDC's Office on Smoking and Health

Advocates can [urge their members of Congress to support increased funding for public health programs and agencies](#) and reject the proposed cuts in the president's budget.

## **APHA calls for increased allocation for health spending bill and urges Congress to raise spending caps for discretionary programs**

On April 1, APHA joined 550 organizations in a [letter to House and Senate Appropriations Committee leaders](#) urging a generous and fair funding allocation for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill. The Labor-HHS-Education bill provides annual funding for the vast majority of federal public health agencies and programs. Unfortunately, the allocation for the bill over the last decade has been far from adequate. Most recently, for FY 2019 the bill received just a 0.6% increase in funding even though overall nondefense discretionary funding increased by 3%, shortchanging important services and activities related to public health, education and workforce and labor by billions of dollars.

In order to ensure Congress can provide a high enough allocation to the Labor-HHS-Education bill to adequately fund the important public health programs and agencies, Congress must also first act to raise the current spending caps created by the 2011 Budget Control Act. The current spending caps will limit the amount of funding available for both nondefense and defense programs in fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Previous bipartisan budget agreements have raised the spending caps, allowing Congress to more adequately fund services essential to Americans nationwide, including public health programs. A bipartisan agreement to raise the spending caps again in FY 2020 and 2021 is essential to preventing devastating cuts to these programs. Failure to reach a budget deal would cut overall nondefense discretionary funding by 12% (adjusting for inflation) compared to fiscal 2019 levels, with many areas sustaining far deeper cuts as Congress seeks to limit the damage in certain areas at the expense of other important critical programs. On April 2, APHA joined more than 840 other state and national organizations in [calling on Congress to pass another balanced and bipartisan budget agreement](#) to protect critical discretionary-funded programs from damaging cuts.

## **APHA supports legislation to strengthen protections for pre-existing conditions and lower health care costs**

On March 26, Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., and Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., introduced the Protecting Pre-Existing Conditions and Making Health Care More Affordable Act of 2019. The bill, sponsored by the chairs of the three House committees with jurisdiction over major health care programs, would expand financial assistance for low- and moderate-income individuals purchasing health insurance through the ACA marketplaces, protect provisions that bar insurers from discriminating against people with pre-existing conditions, and reverse actions taken by the current administration that make it harder for consumers to learn about and enroll in comprehensive coverage. In [a letter](#) to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the bill's sponsors, APHA expressed support for this important legislation, and thanked these Democratic leaders for their commitment to strengthening and protecting the ACA.

The legislation was unveiled the day after the Trump administration announced its support of a district court decision ruling that the ACA is unconstitutional. This was a significant shift from the administration's earlier position that only parts of the law should be struck down. On March 25, the administration submitted its position in a [legal filing](#) with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit, where an appeal is pending in a case challenging the ACA's constitutionality.

### **Legislation addresses the health impacts of climate change**

On Feb. 14, Sen. Edward Markey, D-Mass., and Rep. Matt Cartwright, D-Pa., reintroduced the Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act. The bill, [supported by more than 30 public health and medical organizations](#), would help the public health and medical communities address the challenges of climate change in several ways. First, it would require the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a national strategic action plan for addressing the public health impacts of climate change. Acting through the director of CDC and in coordination with other federal agencies, 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. 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. The legislation would also provide for the development of tools to educate public health and health care professionals and the public about the health impacts of climate change.

Advocates can [urge their members of Congress to co-sponsor the legislation](#).

### **APHA opposes administration's proposed rule to weaken the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

On April 2, [APHA submitted comments](#) opposing the U.S. Department of Agriculture's proposed rule, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents." Under current law, able-bodied adults without dependents, or ABAWDs, are eligible for SNAP benefits for only three months during a three-year period unless they are working or registered in an education or training program. However, states can request to waive this time limit if their unemployment rate exceeds 10 percent or is 20 percent above the national average. The proposed rule would drastically tighten the criteria states must meet to qualify for a waiver, threatening to eliminate access to SNAP benefits for more than 755,000 adults. If finalized, the proposal would also cut SNAP funding by an estimated \$15 billion over 10 years.

SNAP provides more than 40 million low-income Americans, including people with disabilities, children, seniors, veterans and working families, with critical nutrition benefits to strengthen their food security and provide access to a nutritious diet. If finalized, this regulation would add additional barriers to accessing nutritious food,

which would make it even more difficult for individuals already facing economic inequity to find and maintain employment and to prioritize their individual health and the health of their communities. APHA's comments detail the important role SNAP plays in reducing hunger and inequity throughout the nation, and urges the department to withdraw the rule in its entirety.

## **Registration opens for APHA's second annual Speak for Health Advocacy Bootcamp**

This July, APHA will host public health students and early-career professionals in Washington, D.C., for our second annual [Speak for Health Advocacy Bootcamp](#). This two-day training is designed to support the growing number of young public health professionals and students who want to be a part of the movement to strengthen our nation's public health policies. Attendees will learn the basics of how to advocate for evidence-based public health policies, how to amplify advocacy efforts using social media, and how to influence policymakers directly.

This year's bootcamp will focus on broadening support for environmental and climate action. Attendees will get an in-depth issue briefing on the pressing issues climate change poses for the public's health, hear from leaders on the issue and use climate change and health as a case study to practice public health advocacy skills. On day two, attendees will have the chance to put their new skills in to action during in-person meetings, educating their senators, representatives and congressional staff about APHA's climate and health advocacy priorities.

This event is open to public health students and early-career professionals who have graduated within the past five years. [Register today!](#)

## **Additional APHA advocacy news**

Given the rapid pace of action in Washington, D.C., we wanted to highlight additional issues we have weighed in on recently. Those include:

- [Organization letter](#) to House and Senate leaders urging passage of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness & Advancing Innovation Act
- [Health organization letter](#) opposing H.R. 832, the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2019, which would allow whole milk into schools, rolling back the progress made in switching to milk containing less saturated fat
- [APHA letter](#) in support of the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act of 2019
- [Health organization brief](#) in support of the Defendants-Appellees in the case Parents for Privacy v. Dallas School District No. 2