

Sample questions for town halls, candidate forums or other public forums

Our goal as public health advocates is to speak for health and demonstrate the importance of public health in our communities around the nation. The following sample questions are designed to help start conversations about public health issues with policymakers and candidates running for office at the federal, state and local levels. These sample questions cover some of APHA's advocacy priorities: increasing public health funding, expanding access to care, addressing the health impacts of climate change, protecting access to reproductive health care, and gun violence prevention and research.

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

Note that the lists provided with certain questions only examples 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 funding for the vital services they provide in our state and communities is at risk. These services include *(Fill in with relevant services for your community — see list below for examples)*. Unfortunately, the Trump administration and some in Congress are proposing drastic cuts in funding to key programs 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 oppose these cuts and instead support increased funding for these chronically underfunded agencies and programs and oppose any future efforts to restrain or cut this important funding?
 - a. *Infectious disease detection and prevention*
 - b. *Chronic disease prevention activities*
 - c. *Public health workers including personnel at state and local health departments*
 - d. *Public health laboratories*
 - 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 programs*
2. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration fund programs that are critical to improving the public's health. 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 diseases and injuries when the Trump administration and some in Congress are proposing to eliminate or drastically cut funding for programs that prevent and treat these problems? Will you commit to working with your House and Senate colleagues to support increased funding for CDC and HRSA as Congress works to develop the FY 2027 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill? Will you also work to oppose any misguided proposed reorganizations of these agencies and insist on strict Congressional oversight?

- 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. *Public health infrastructure*
- g. *Injury prevention*
- h. *Addressing the health impacts of climate change*
- i. *Social determinants of health*

Expanding access to care/strengthening the Affordable Care Act

1. The Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion 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 so-called One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed last year contains significant cuts to the Medicaid program and makes changes to the ACA that, when combined, will lead to 16 million individuals losing coverage. Will you commit to working with your colleagues in a bipartisan manner to work to reverse these cuts and to oppose any future efforts to weaken or repeal the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, and other important health coverage programs, and instead support efforts to strengthen these programs to cover more of the nation's uninsured population?

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, in the past Congress has passed legislation to cut or redirect the fund for unintended purposes – 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. Can I count on 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*

Climate change and health

1. The [fifth National Climate Assessment](#) details the health impacts of climate change in the United States and notes, “As extreme events and other climate hazards intensify, harmful impacts on people across the United States are increasing. Climate impacts—combined with other stressors—are leading to ripple effects across sectors and regions that multiply harms, with disproportionate effects on underserved and overburdened communities.” Will you heed this clear scientific evidence and pledge to work with your colleagues to take steps now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change and harm 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 maintaining this important funding that helps funded states develop plans to protect their communities from the health threats posed by climate change?
3. The Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act of 2025 would create a grant program to fund local organizations and empower communities to prevent and heal mental health problems caused by all types of stressors and adversities, including climate change generated disasters and emergencies. Can I count on you to cosponsor this important legislation?

Gun violence prevention

1. In the final FY 2026 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill Congress provided funding of \$12.5 million each for CDC and the National Institutes of Health to conduct firearm injury and mortality prevention research. This year, I am urging Congress to increase this funding and provide NIH with \$25 million, CDC with \$35 million and the National Institute for Justice with \$1 million for a total of \$61 million, for this critical research. Can I count on your support for continued and increased funding for these agencies to conduct gun violence prevention research in FY 2026?
2. Gun violence is one of the nation’s leading preventable causes of death. In 2023, 46,728 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 [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? Will you also support additional legislation to keep dangerous firearms out of the wrong hands?

Access to reproductive and maternal health service

1. The Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* undid decades of Roe precedent and eliminated the federal right to abortion. As a result, people who can become pregnant are at risk of losing access to abortion in dozens of states that have passed legislation restricting and banning abortion. Will you commit to supporting legislation like the [Women's Health Protection Act \(S.2150/H.R.12\)](#) to codify the right to abortion at the federal level and protect against state-level attacks against reproductive health care?

Nutrition access

1. In 2024, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program served 42 million individuals, 20 million of which were children. The program helps fight food insecurity and provides reliable markets and steady revenue for retailers, food manufacturers, distributors, and farmers. Every dollar issued in SNAP benefits generates [up to \\$1.54 in additional economic activity](#). Unfortunately, the recently passed budget reconciliation legislation would cut the SNAP program by approximately \$200 billion. As a result of these cuts, millions will be at risk of either completely losing their nutrition benefits or seeing them cut, including parents, children, older adults and veterans. Additionally, the bill would shift billions of dollars in SNAP expenses to the states, putting a significant increased financial burden on the states for a program that has been fully federally funded for nearly five decades. Will you commit to working with your colleagues in a bipartisan manner to reverse these cuts and support access to essential nutrition programs that fight food insecurity?