



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

For science. For action. For health.

November 5, 2021

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write in strong support of H.R. 5376, the Build Back Better Act. This historic legislation includes many of the initiatives in President Biden's Build Back Better agenda including a wide range of important provisions that are critical to improving the health of the nation. The legislation would strengthen our public health infrastructure, protect the public from the health threats associated with climate change and expand access to comprehensive and affordable health coverage. I strongly urge your support for this legislation which will improve the health and well-being of all our communities.

We are extremely pleased that the legislation includes important new funding to support and strengthen the nation's public health infrastructure. The legislation provides \$7 billion to help strengthen our state and local health departments to ensure they have the cross-cutting capabilities, tools and trained workforce to address existing and emerging health threats and prepare for the next pandemic while also combating existing health disparities. Importantly, the bill also includes \$1.4 billion to expand and modernize the nation's local, state and federal public health laboratory infrastructure. Chronic underfunding of public health continues to threaten the ability of the public health workforce to respond to the many ongoing health threats we face as a nation. We are grateful for the resources provided in this legislation and we look forward to working with Congress and the administration to build upon these investments to ensure continued and sustained long-term funding for the nation's critical public health infrastructure and workforce.

The bill also includes significant investments to combat climate change, transition to clean energy and protect the public from this growing health crisis while advancing environmental justice by ensuring these investments deliver significant benefits to traditionally underserved communities. The recently released Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report provides definitive scientific evidence that we must act with great urgency to avert irreversible climate change that will be catastrophic to human health and wellbeing. This legislation will help speed the transition of our energy and transportation sectors away from fossil fuels and towards clean, safe and renewable energy. Specifically, the bill includes funding for long-term tax credits for clean energy, energy efficiency and clean transportation, an extension of tax credits for electric vehicles, investments to support an electric vehicle charging infrastructure and other investments to address the threats posed by climate change.

The Build Back Better Act also includes significant investments for expanding and improving health coverage in the nation moving us closer to the goal of achieving universal health coverage for all. The bill would close the current Medicaid coverage gap by providing premium tax credits and cost-sharing subsidies for more than 2 million uninsured individuals who live below the poverty line through 2025. Importantly, the bill would also expand Medicare benefits by adding coverage for hearing services for millions of our nation's seniors. The bill would also extend the American Rescue Plan Act's enhanced premium tax credits for purchasing Affordable Care Act plans in the federal marketplace through 2025.

In addition, the legislation would provide important new investments to improve the health of our nation's children and their families. The bill would require 12 months of continuous Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program eligibility to postpartum women, implement interventions and research to address the nation's maternal mortality crisis, require 12 months of continuous eligibility for children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP and authorize permanent funding for CHIP. The bill would also provide four weeks of paid family and medical leave, provide \$9 billion for lead remediation, including lead service line replacement, increase access to affordable child care and expand access to free school meals for 9 million additional children.

Passage of this critical legislation is essential to improving and protecting the health of the nation and we urge your support for the bill when it comes to the House floor for a vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "G".

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director