

Legislative Update



September 2025

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House Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee advances FY 2026 spending bill with significant cuts to public health programs

On Sept. 2, the House Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee voted to pass its version of the FY 2026 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill by a party-line vote of 11-7. While the bill does not include the massive reorganization or cuts to key public health agencies as called for in the president's FY 2026 budget request, it does include significant cuts to key public health programs and agencies. The bill would cut CDC funding by \$1.7 billion below current year levels. Specifically, the bill eliminates funding for the following CDC programs:

- Global and domestic HIV prevention programs
- Climate and Health program
- Gun violence prevention research program
- Tobacco prevention and control funding
- Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant

The bill also cuts funding for other critical CDC programs, including global health and global health disease prevention, and provides modest increases for public

health infrastructure, public health data modernization and the Infectious Disease Rapid Response Fund.

Other HHS agencies also face significant funding cuts under the House proposal:

- Funding for the Health Resources and Services Administration would be cut by \$886 million below FY 2025 levels, including the elimination of the Title X Family Planning program, significant cuts to the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program and cuts to important health workforce training programs.
- Funding for the National Institutes of Health would be reduced by \$456 million below current year levels.
- Funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration would be cut by \$298 million.
- Funding for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality would be eliminated.

The bill also includes \$100 million for the creation of the Make America Health Again initiative — an initiative championed by HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

Additional funding details are expected to be released after the full House Appropriations Committee considers the bill, which is expected to happen soon. Summaries of [the bill](#) from the [Republicans](#) and [Democrats](#) are available for additional details.

In late July, the Senate Appropriations Committee, unlike the House, passed its version of the bill with a strong bipartisan vote, maintaining level funding for most programs and agencies. The Senate bill would boost NIH funding by \$400 million over FY 2025 and would provide CDC with \$9.1 billion, a small reduction from FY 2025 but significantly higher funding total than provided for in the House bill.

APHA members can contact their members of Congress and urge them to prioritize public health funding as they work to finalize the FY 2026 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill by visiting [APHA's action alert site](#).

APHA calls for HHS Secretary Kennedy's removal after CDC leadership firings and resignations

On Aug. 28, APHA's executive director, Dr. Georges C. Benjamin, [issued a statement calling for the removal of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#) as secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services after the dismissal of Dr. Susan Monarez as Director of the CDC after just months on the job and in the wake of a mass shooting at the agency's headquarters in Atlanta. Monarez was reportedly forced out of her position for refusing to sign off on changes to vaccine recommendations

that were not based on evidence and the latest science. In addition to Monarez's firing, several other senior CDC leaders resigned either by choice or due to pressure for failing to accept decisions that would undermine their integrity and endanger the health of the public.

APHA previously [opposed Kennedy's nomination and confirmation](#) by the Senate and has continued to speak out against the many missteps he has made and the misinformation he has shared since his confirmation.

APHA also continues to express our support for CDC staff and the agency's mission and programs and will continue to advocate for strong leadership and funding that allows the agency and its staff to fulfill the many important activities and interventions it leads in protecting the health of the American public.

APHA submits comments advocating for federal recognition of schools of public health

On July 25, the U.S. Department of Education published a proposed rule regarding implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Groups noted concern that the rule did not clearly include Master in Public Health (MPH) and Doctor in Public Health (DrPH) programs in the list of federally recognized professional programs. Unfortunately, this would impact factors like access to financial aid for public health students and ultimately threaten the future public health workforce. The rule also overlooks the fact that professional public health degrees are accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health, which is formally recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the accrediting body for academic public health.

In response, [APHA submitted comments on the proposed rule](#) that recommend the following:

- Expanding the list of certified programs to include MPH and DrPH programs
- Including public health expertise in financial aid and rulemaking committees
- Recognizing that public health workers are often frontline responders in emergencies in federal definitions and financing
- Providing clarity around loan limit changes for public health student borrowers
- Maintaining adequate DOE staff for the students who rely on DOE for helpdesk services, regional support and more

The letter stresses that these changes to the rule are critical for empowering public health students with opportunities that their peers in other professions have access to and ultimately maintaining a strong future public health workforce to keep our nation healthy.

APHA joins comments to FDA to lower nicotine amounts in tobacco products

On Jan. 16, 2025, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced a proposed rule titled "[Tobacco Product Standard for Nicotine Yield of Cigarettes and Certain Other Combusted Tobacco Products](#)." The rule proposes establishing a maximum nicotine level in cigarettes and certain other combusted tobacco products with the intent of ultimately decreasing the addictiveness of tobacco products. On Aug. 25, APHA joined the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids in [submitting comments on the rule](#) that explain the addictive nature of nicotine and the public health impact of reducing nicotine amounts. The comments make clear that the impacts of the proposed rule would include: helping current smokers quit, helping prevent youth from ever becoming addicted, and reducing tobacco-related health disparities. The comments urge FDA to apply the standard to all products, including cigars and hookah to broaden the public health impact and prevent the tobacco industry from abusing any potential definition loopholes. The comments agree with FDA's proposed limit of 0.7 milligrams per gram and commend the agency for taking action to protect the public's health from the harms of smoking.