

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you and your colleagues begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education appropriations bill, the undersigned 121 organizations **respectfully request that you fully fund the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program at its \$100 million authorization level and provide \$50 million to launch the new Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program** at the Health Resources and Services Administration.

**The state and local public health workforce is the backbone of the nation’s governmental public health system but is facing a crisis.** In the past decade, state and local health departments lost 15 percent of essential staff, and 80,000 more full-time equivalents – an increase of nearly 80 percent – are needed to provide a minimum package of public health services.<sup>1</sup> While all health departments need additional staff, one of the most acute needs is in small local health departments which often serve rural communities. Without sufficient staff, health departments may not be able to carry out essential services like screening and treatment for both chronic and communicable diseases; maternal and child health services; epidemiology and surveillance; routine immunizations; primary prevention services; and regulation, inspection, or licensing. Local and state health departments are also our nation’s first line response to public health emergencies. An underinvestment in state and local public health workforce leaves our communities under-prepared to respond to emergencies, including infectious disease outbreaks, environmental hazards, and weather-related events.

**Meanwhile, the infectious disease (ID) workforce that works in collaboration with public health is also in crisis.** Workforce shortages coupled with lower pay and a lack of financial incentives for recruitment and retention persist among ID and HIV health care professionals, including ID physicians, clinical microbiologists, nurses, pharmacists, physician assistants, infection preventionists, and dentists. In 2022, 80 percent of U.S. counties lacked an ID physician, and just over half of ID physician training programs filled, compared to most other physician specialties which filled nearly all their programs. A quarter of health care facilities have reported a vacant infection preventionist position and a 2019 survey showed a vacancy rate for clinical microbiologists of over 10 percent. Communities without ID health care professionals will be less equipped to respond to threats like antimicrobial resistance, health care

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<sup>1</sup> <https://debeaumont.org/staffing-up/>

associated infections, and infectious diseases associated with the opioid epidemic, and less able to advance federal initiatives to End the HIV Epidemic and eliminate viral hepatitis.

Our organizations are grateful to Congress for recognizing the challenges facing these vital workforces and including Section 2221 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 bipartisan legislation authorizing both the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program and the Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program. These programs will provide needed financial incentives to bring public health and ID professionals into settings where they are crucially needed. We are hopeful that your Subcommittee will build on this important progress and provide funding for these programs in FY 2024.

**As your Subcommittee makes funding decisions for FY 2024, we urge you to fully fund the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program at its \$100 million authorization level and provide \$50 million to launch the new Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program.**

Investing in these bipartisan programs would promote the recruitment and retention of as many as 2,000 public health professionals at local, state, and Tribal public health agencies across the country, and as many as 1,000 ID and HIV health care professionals in rural and urban health professional shortage areas, medically underserved communities, or federal facilities by offering loan repayment in exchange for three-year service commitments. These commonsense incentives will help ensure our public health and ID workforces grow sufficiently to keep our communities safe and healthy in the years to come.

Sincerely,

National Association of County and City Health Officials  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
AIDS United  
American Academy of HIV Medicine  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Microbiology  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
HIV Medicine Association  
ACT NOW: END AIDS (ANEA) Coalition  
African American Health Alliance  
AFSCME  
AHF  
AIDS Action Baltimore  
AIDS Alabama  
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families  
AIDS Foundation Chicago  
American Academy of Nursing  
American Association for Clinical Chemistry  
American College of Clinical Pharmacy  
American Dental Association  
Association of Ohio Health Commissioners

Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Bell Primary Care  
Big Cities Health Coalition  
CAEAR Coalition  
California Alliance of Academics and Communities for Public Health Equity  
Cares of Southwest Michigan  
Cascade AIDS Project  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
Central Outreach Wellness Center  
ChangeLab Solutions  
Children's Hospital at Montefiore  
Clemson Rural Health  
Coalition of National Health Education Organizations  
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials  
Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health  
Cook County Department of Public Health  
Cook County Health  
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation  
Duke University School of Nursing  
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation  
Embrace Health  
Equality California  
Fenway Health  
Five Horizons Health Services  
Florence Urgent Care  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality  
GMHC  
Greater Lawrence Family Health Center  
Hennepin County  
HIV Dental Alliance  
Hope and Help Center of Central Florida, Inc. d/b/a Hope & Help  
Housing Works, Inc.  
Howard Brown Health  
Human Rights Campaign  
Infectious Diseases Associates, PLLC  
International Association of Providers of AIDS Care  
Johns Hopkins University  
Kentucky Health Departments Association, Inc.  
Kern Medical  
Legacy Community Health  
Legacy Community Health  
LivWell Community Health Services, Inc.  
Los Angeles LGBT Center  
Maryland Association of County Health Officers  
Med Centro, Programa Ryan White, Ponce PR

MercyOne DesMoines Medical Center  
Michael Reese Research and Education Foundation  
Michigan Association for Local Public Health  
Michigan State University/Trinity Health  
NASTAD  
National Alliance of Public Health Students and Alums (NAPHSAs)  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Pharmaceutical Association (NPhA)  
National Rural Health Association  
Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors (NALHD)  
New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials (NJACCHO)  
New Jersey Environmental Health Association  
NMAC  
North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors  
North Colorado Family Medicine  
Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials  
PA Education Association  
PCAF  
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society  
Peggy Lillis Foundation for C. diff Education & Advocacy  
Project Weber/RENEW  
PWN-USA  
Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition  
Safe States Alliance  
San Diego State School of Public Health  
San Diego State University  
School-Based Health Alliance  
Sepsis Alliance  
SisterLove Inc  
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America  
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists (SIDP)  
Stuart B. Levy Center for Integrated Management of Antimicrobial Resistance at Tufts  
Sunshine Specialty Care Center LLC  
Temple Comprehensive HIV Program  
Tennessee Public Health Association  
Texas Association of City and County Health Officials  
The DrPH Coalition  
The Gerontological Society of America  
The New York State Association of County Health Officials, Inc.  
Treatment Action Group (TAG)  
Trinity Health  
Trust for America's Health  
UNC Health & UNC School of Medicine  
University of California Berkeley School of Public Health  
University of Colorado

University of Maryland School of Nursing  
Valley AIDS Council  
Valley Fever Institute  
Vermont Public Health Association  
Washington State Association of Local Health Officials  
Washington State Public Health Association  
Whitley County Health Department