



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

For science. For action. For health.

October 3, 2017

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals who champion the health of all people and communities, I write in strong opposition to using any portion of the Prevention and Public Health Fund to pay for the Community Health And Medical Professionals Improve Our Nation Act of 2017 or for any other unintended purpose.

The American Public Health Association is a longstanding champion of the health programs that expired on Sept. 30. Community health centers, the National Health Service Corps, teaching health centers, family-to-family health information centers and the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program are all important programs for achieving the Health Resources and Services Administration's mission to improve health and achieve health equity. The Children's Health Insurance Program is also essential to ensuring millions of children have health insurance and the chance to pursue their full potential. However, funding these programs at the expense of other public health programs is counterproductive and shortsighted. Funding for public health is essential for preventing illness and injury, and for keeping children and families healthy.

We strongly urge you to immediately extend funding for the safety net programs that expired on Sept. 30, and urge you to do so without using any portion of the prevention fund as an offset. Unfortunately, as currently drafted, the CHAMPION Act would take \$6.35 billion away from the prevention fund over the next eight years (FYs 2019-2026) to extend funding for these other health programs.

The prevention fund is meant to expand and sustain national investment in prevention and public health programs, which is absolutely necessary to improve the health of people across the nation and slow the rise of health care costs. The United States faces significant health and fiscal challenges that could be mitigated by a better and more reliably funded public health system. The fund is a vital part of the effort to create such a system and redirecting the fund to other programs undermines local, state, tribal and federal efforts to improve the health and vitality of people in every state.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund is the first and only mandatory funding stream specifically dedicated to public health and prevention activities. The fund has already provided more than \$6 billion to support a variety of public health activities in every state including tracking and preventing infectious diseases like the Ebola and Zika viruses, and community and clinical prevention programs. The prevention fund has also helped reduce the risk of childhood lead poisoning, expand access to childhood immunizations, support breastfeeding, and encourage parents and caregivers to stop smoking and eat healthier. Cutting 57 percent of the prevention fund, as proposed by the CHAMPION Act, would devastate the budget of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The fund currently makes up 12 percent of CDC's budget and eliminating a substantial portion of this funding stream would force Congress to replace the funding through the regular appropriations process where resources for nondefense discretionary programs are already too low. For the future of our children and the future of our nation, we cannot afford to cut the prevention fund.

We ask you to oppose this and any future effort to undermine the integrity of the Prevention and Public Health Fund. We look forward to working with you to creating a healthier nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director

Cc: House Energy and Commerce Committee