



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

*For science. For action. For health.*

December 18, 2017

The Honorable Eric D. Hargan  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Hargan:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is the nation's premier public health agency and is respected around the world for the exemplary efforts of its workforce to reduce and prevent chronic disease, protect the nation and the world from the threat of infectious disease outbreaks and conduct the surveillance that informs our nation's federal, state and local public health workforce about the current and potential health threats in their communities. We must ensure CDC's activities and programs are free of political interference and remain evidence-based and grounded in science.

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 to express our concern regarding recent reports in the media that CDC has been instructed to change the language used to describe its important public health work in materials related to the agency's FY 2019 budget request.

APHA strongly objects to any effort to discourage the use of clear, science-based language or to undermine the integrity of the work of HHS agencies by inserting political ideology into the process of developing HHS agency budgets. Using established and clear language in describing the important public health and prevention programs funded by CDC is critically important to making sure that the public and Congress, which will ultimately determine the funding for CDC's programs, understand the broad and vital work the agency is undertaking to protect and improve the nation's health and that adequate resources are provided for CDC's programs. We urge you and the leaders of the other HHS agencies to ensure your staff are not restricted in their efforts to communicate about HHS programs that improve the public's health and ensure health equity for all Americans.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response as we continue to work with you and all of the HHS agencies in our effort to create the healthiest nation in one generation.

Sincerely,

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

Georges C. Benjamin, MD  
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Mick Mulvaney  
Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald