Public health funding: The state of Mississippi spends an average of $12 a year on the public health needs of each resident, placing the state 48th in the nation. Mississippi receives an additional $25.76 per person in funding from CDC (18th in the nation) and $37.44 per person from HRSA (10th in the nation). The Prevention and Public Health Fund has awarded over $26 million in grants to Mississippi since 2010 for community and clinical prevention efforts and improvements to public health infrastructure.

Access to care: 15.8 percent of Mississippi residents do not have health insurance, above the national average of 13.1 percent.

Health measures: Mississippi has the 3rd highest rate of obesity in the nation (35.5 percent of adults) and the 3rd highest rate of diabetes (13 percent of adults). The state also has the 6th highest rate of smoking (23 percent of adults). Additionally, the state ranks highest in the nation for the following measures: physical inactivity (31.6 percent of adults), deaths from cardiovascular disease (344.5 deaths per 100,000 people) and infant mortality (9.3 per 1,000 live births).

The road ahead: Mississippi has public health strengths as well, such as low rates of binge drinking (12.8 percent of adult population) and violent crime (274.6 offenses per 100,000 people). However, it is clear that the state faces some of the most severe public health challenges in the U.S. Also, although health measures such as infant mortality remain higher in Mississippi than any other state it is important to recognize that steady progress has been achieved – the infant mortality rate has decreased by 28 percent since 1990.

In response to an informal survey sent to our membership and 53 state Affiliates:

- A public health worker in Mississippi told us, “As a rural state with limited financial resources, Mississippi relies heavily on federal funding for public health programs. For years Mississippi’s public health department has received more than 50% of its program funding from various federal sources.”

- Another public health worker expressed that, “as a result of five full time staff cuts, in response to the budget, morale and program size are both at an all-time low.” In response to a follow up question about how cuts affected relationships with the community, “Credibility often follows dollars, and when there is none to share, partnerships are difficult at best and fall apart at worst.”

Sources: Trust for America’s Health, Investing in America’s Health; Trust for America’s Health, Prevention and Public Health Fund at Work in States; United Health Foundation, America’s Health Rankings.