

March 13, 2023

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH), we want to thank your Committee for the steadfast support of public health programs that span the Labor-HHS-ED appropriations bill. In addition to the ongoing demands of our public health system, the current pandemic has challenged every aspect of the public health community's response to protect the American people and global populations. Your Committee has continued to provide critical financial resources to advance those efforts.

As you begin the process of drafting the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Labor-HHS-ED appropriations bill, please consider our funding recommendations that support the mission of our 141 academic institutions to provide public health education, workforce practice training, and research. The agencies and programs below provide the essential resources to advance evidence-based approaches to public health threats and prepare future generations of public health practitioners. These investments will lead to tangible public health outcomes that will benefit the nation and the world.

Our FY 2024 funding recommendations for the leading Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) public health agencies are aligned with many other organizations in the public health community:

National Institutes of Health (NIH): We are grateful for bipartisan support for continuous increases to the NIH budget and request \$50.924 billion for ongoing work of Institutes and Centers, an increase of \$3.524 billion or 7% above the FY 2023 level. This additional funding would allow NIH's base budget to keep pace with the biomedical research and development price index (BRDPI) and allow meaningful growth of 5%. Within the total amount for NIH, ASPPH requests:

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- \$1.0 billion for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). These funds are particularly necessary as the Agency continues to grow and become established.
- \$104.6 million, an increase of \$9.5 million or 10%, for the Fogarty International Center. The investment in Fogarty is an investment in the health of all Americans. This funding is essential to provide support for vital global research and training to prevent newly emerging infectious agents from becoming domestic calamities and to help reduce the rising rate of noncommunicable diseases and the impact of chronic conditions around the world.
 - **Report Language:** *Fogarty International Center (FIC)*. – The Center supports cross-cutting research and research training programs that apply to a broad range of health threats, enabling grantees and trainees to anticipate and respond effectively to new global challenges. Programs within the Center also support training for researchers in the development and use of powerful tools such as data science, mobile health, and bioinformatics, which are applied to anticipating and controlling a wide range of global health threats that could impact the United States. The Committee encourages FIC to continue to expand training and research partnerships with schools and programs of public health and related academic institutions in support of this core mission, including new investments to support health disparities and pandemic research preparedness and response.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Robust support for the CDC budget is essential to enable the agency to carry out its prevention and research translation mission on the community level. The Agency's work is critical to ensure better health outcomes across the U.S. We request \$11.0 billion, an increase of \$1.8 billion or 20% above the FY 2023 enacted level. Many programs at the CDC have lacked the necessary resources to address current and future health challenges. It is imperative that we proactively make proper investments in the country's public health system so we are well-equipped for the next crisis. Within the total amount for CDC, ASPPH requests:

- \$100 million, an increase of \$50 million over FY 2023, for the **Center for Forecasting and Outbreak Analytics**. The Center plays an important role in convening the next generation of public health data professionals, expert disease modelers, emergency responders, and public health communicators.
 - **Report Language:** *Center for Forecasting and Outbreak Analytics*. – The Committee includes \$100,000,000 to continue the new Center for Forecasting and Outbreaks Analytics (CFA), which was originally funded through the American Rescue Plan Act in FY 2022. The Center addresses a critical need to improve the U.S. government's ability to forecast and model emerging health threats and take timely action to mitigate their effects, such as social and economic disruption. The Committee urges the Center to continue to work with schools of public health and other academic institutions to engage the nation's expertise in disease modeling, public health data analysis, research, and training to build workforce capacity in this emerging field. With additional resources, CFA will work to develop modeling tools and other products, and eventually STLT capacity, enabling stakeholders at multiple levels to make more and better-informed decisions on preparing for and responding to the next public health emergency. As an interagency resource for early warnings related to emerging biological threats, the Center will support the public health system in detecting, responding to, and eventually preventing future epidemics and outbreaks.
- \$35.0 million, an increase of \$6.1 million or 21% above the FY 2023 enacted level, for the **Prevention Research Centers (PRCs)**. The PRCs are a national network of academic research centers committed to conducting prevention research. They are leaders in translating research results into policy and public health practice. PRCs work closely with community members to establish health priorities and develop applicable research projects that address local public health needs. These partners collaborate with health departments, educational boards, and the private sector to form long-term relationships that make PRCs the leaders in community based participatory

research. In the past, for every \$1 the PRCs received from CDC, they were able to generate an average of \$4.85 in research funds from other sources. As a result, PRCs are able to conduct hundreds of public health research projects every year to address issues such as cancer, smoking, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular and many other conditions.

- **Report Language:** Prevention Research Centers (PRCs). – The Committee provides an increase of \$6,100,000 for PRCs to expand on the work being done by the national network to conduct prevention research, and ensure that CDC is able to support no less than the existing number of centers after the upcoming five-year grant competition which has been forecasted to increase the average award size.
- \$15 million, an increase of \$5.8 million or 63% above the FY 2023 enacted level, for **Centers for Public Health Preparedness and Response**. ASPPH supports funding the new authorization for the Centers for Public Health Preparedness and Response program that was enacted in the PREVENT Pandemics Act. This authorization establishes not fewer than 10 centers at institutions of higher education, including schools of public health, and other nonprofit private entities, to establish a network of preparedness centers spread geographically across the country. The centers would coordinate preparedness and response activities with governmental health departments, health care providers, and coalitions to translate research findings into evidence-informed and evidence-based practices, support training needs, and provide technical assistance and expertise. This framework of a national network of centers will strengthen the connection between academic public health and public health departments and health care systems to proactively address future public health threats. In previous years, annual appropriations for a similar CDC program exceeded \$30 million and supported 21 academic preparedness centers at schools of public health that were created by Congress in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.
 - **Report Language:** *Centers for Public Health Preparedness and Response*. – The Committee provides \$15,000,000 to establish no fewer than 10 regional Centers for Public Health Preparedness and Response to identify, translate, and disseminate promising research finding and evidence-informed or evidence-based practices to inform preparedness for, and responses to, chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear threats, including emerging infectious diseases, and other public health emergencies. The centers will provide technical assistance to state, local, and tribal health departments relating to public health preparedness and response, including participation in drills and exercises and training public health experts to enhance preparedness and response systems.

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA): Programs within HRSA are critical to ensuring an adequately trained public health workforce. We request \$10.5 billion, an increase of \$1.1 billion or 12% above the FY 2023 enacted level to support efforts necessary to prepare the next generation of public health workers, with schools and programs of public health at the forefront. Within the total amount for HRSA, ASPPH requests:

- \$15 million for **Public Health Training Centers**. This is an increase of \$4.8 million or 47% above the FY 2023 enacted level. Funding is critical to support 10 Regional Public Health Training Centers (RPHTCs), located at top universities throughout the United States, especially as public health demands increase. These Centers bring decades of experience in building the leadership, managerial, scientific, and technical skills of the public health workforce. The RPHTCs are well suited to address these needs yet they require sustained and increased funding.
 - **Report Language:** *Public Health Training Centers*. – The Committee provides \$15,000,000, an increase of \$4,800,000, for Public Health Training Centers. The Public Health Training Center Program is the nation's only comprehensive training system to ensure workers in healthcare, behavioral health, public health and other fields have the skills needed to respond to increasingly complex public health challenges and protect the nation's health.

- \$100 million for the **Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program**. Congress recently reauthorized this critical program in the PREVENT Pandemics Act, to help governmental public health departments address their multiple workforce challenges, including recruiting qualified applicants for openings and retaining these workers long-term. Student loan debt is a major obstacle to students seeking careers in governmental public health due to low-paying, entry-level jobs that are available in health departments. Degree-associated federal student loan debt for public health degrees is high relative to earnings one year following degree completion, across degree levels. For master's level training the median level of federal student debt was \$44,479 and median earnings one year following degree completion were \$52,878. Loan repayment will allow our nation to strengthen the capacity of the public health workforce with the next generation of professionals who have the educational training in public health and related disciplines. This is a vital program to help public health graduates make significant contributions to advance the field of public health practice, particularly in preparation for the next public health crisis.
 - **Report Language:** *Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program*. – The Committee provides the authorized level of \$100,000,000 for a loan repayment program to reduce the public health workforce shortage.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ): AHRQ is the only federal agency that funds research at universities and other research institutions specifically on health systems. This includes research that takes into account the “real-life” patient who has complex comorbidities, as well as intersections with aspects of the overall health care system including meeting public health needs. We support \$500 million, an increase of \$126.5 million or 34% above the FY 2023 enacted level.

National Hepatitis C Elimination Program: Under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), mandatory spending, we support this program at \$11.3 billion in total spending over 5 years, including net saving for a total expenditure of \$5.1 billion. Some 2.4 million Americans currently suffer from chronic hepatitis C, and many of those lack access to the cure that can be provided in just 8-12 weeks from a safe and highly effective direct-acting antiviral drug. Hepatitis C is also the most common cause of liver cancer today. This program has a chance to eliminate a devastating disease through a classic public health approach of testing vulnerable populations and providing point-of-care treatment to those who do test positive. This effort would reduce healthcare costs enabling the program to pay for itself.

On behalf of our 141 schools and programs of public health, representing over 11,000 faculty and over 81,000 students, we strongly support your legislative efforts during the appropriations process, and stand ready to assist you and your staff with additional information and resources from across our institutions. Please feel free to contact ASPPH's Director of Advocacy, Beeta Rasouli at brasouli@aspph.org or 202-534-2389 with questions.

Sincerely,



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Chief External Relations and Advocacy Officer
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