

June 10, 2019

Chairman Frank Pallone  
Energy & Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in support of provisions in the Leading Infrastructure For Tomorrow's America Act (LIFT America Act) to invest in America's public health infrastructure. Public health is a crucial part of the nation's essential infrastructure, and investing in it will save lives and money.

All too often, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and health departments are under-resourced and under-staffed.<sup>i</sup> A recent report by Trust for America's Health, *The Impact of Chronic Underfunding on America's Public Health*, found that chronic underfunding has presented a consistent obstacle that is preventing the public health system from adequately tackling leading health threats.<sup>ii</sup> America spends about \$3.5 trillion on healthcare, less than three percent of which supports governmental public health.<sup>iii</sup> In fact, a study out of the University of Kentucky estimated a total shortfall of about \$13 per person – or \$4.5 billion for the entire nation – to implement comprehensive public health capabilities.<sup>iv</sup> As recent public health crises, like the measles outbreaks and substance misuse epidemic, have shown, a comprehensive, well-resourced public health system and workforce is needed for effective responses.

The CDC as well as state, local, tribal and territorial health departments, public health laboratories, and community partners need a well-functioning infrastructure to prevent and respond to major health harms. That infrastructure includes facilities and equipment, such as governmental laboratories; up-to-date data and information systems; and a highly skilled and qualified workforce - including those who are the front lines when a deadly infectious disease or dangerous environmental hazard needs to be contained.<sup>v,vi</sup> The LIFT America Act would authorize funding for cross-cutting core public health and laboratory infrastructure, rather than funding disease-specific capabilities, enabling public health to be nimble in prevention of and response to a range of emerging health conditions. The legislation would invest in workforce capacity and competency, laboratory systems, health information systems, communications, financing and other critical components.

In addition, the success of public health relies upon accurate and timely data, but there are health departments that are still communicating time-sensitive information the way they did a half century ago— by phone, fax and paper. Public health information systems are dependent on outdated technology, systems that are not interoperable, and lack of adequately trained workforce. These outdated systems are delaying public health's ability to detect outbreaks, communicate with clinicians, and target interventions to prevent disease. The LIFT America Act authorizes critical investments in the public health data infrastructure to transform the speed and accuracy of public health surveillance. Doing so will enable faster detection and containment of outbreaks, with fewer cases – saving lives and reducing delays in response.

As the Zika, Ebola and H1N1 outbreaks, opioid epidemic, natural disasters and rise in chronic diseases have demonstrated, health threats are increasing in frequency and severity, undermining the nation's economic and health security. U.S. life expectancy has declined for the third year in a row, the longest sustained decline in expected life span since 1918.<sup>vii</sup> A pandemic could cost the U.S. economy as much as \$45 billion.<sup>viii</sup> And an unhealthy workforce adds billions in direct and indirect costs to the healthcare system and economy. Yet, public health systems and program spending have been shown to have a positive return on investment and improvement in health outcomes – including reducing preventable deaths.<sup>ix, x, xi</sup> But public health must have the resources to modernize.

Public health is as critical to the nation's success as roads, bridges, and communications systems. We stand ready to work with Congress to authorize and fund these transformative investments in public health infrastructure.

Sincerely,

AES Consulting  
African American Health Alliance  
Alameda County (CA) Health Care Services Agency  
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments  
All Youth Access  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA)  
American Public Health Association  
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene  
American Thoracic Society  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Benzie Leelanau (MI) District Health Department  
Big Cities Health Coalition  
Boulder County Public Health  
Cardiometabolic Research Institute  
Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP)  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
Central Michigan Regional Rural Health Network  
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials  
Community Action, Service & Advocacy (CASA)  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Cuyahoga County Board of Health  
Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families  
Doctors for America

Dorchester County Health Department  
Element Health, Inc.  
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
Healthcare Ready  
Health Care Systems Research Network  
Health Department of Northwest Michigan  
Health Resources in Action  
Hepatitis Education Project  
Hispanic Health Initiatives, Inc. (HHI)  
HLN Consulting, LLC  
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health  
Hope Whispers Community Organization Inc.  
Immunization Action Coalition  
Impetus – Let’s Get Started, LLC  
Institute For Professional Education  
Jefferson County (CO) Public Health  
Kitsap (WA) Public Health District  
Lake County (IL) Health Department and Community Health Center  
Lawrence-Douglas County (KS) Health Department  
Louisiana Public Health Association  
Maine Public Health Association  
March of Dimes  
Mary Ann Liebert Inc.  
Maryland Public Health Association  
Mental Health America of Kentucky  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Michigan Public Health Institute  
Minneapolis Health Department  
Mississippi Urban League, Inc.  
MQ Foundation  
NASTAD  
National Association for Health and Fitness  
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS)  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials  
National Athletic Trainers' Association  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable  
National WIC Association  
NC Public Health Association  
New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials  
New Jersey Environmental Health Organization  
New Jersey Public Health Association

New Progressive Alliance  
OZ Systems  
Peggy Lillis Foundation  
Philadelphia Department of Public Health  
Physicians for Social Responsibility, Arizona Chapter  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevention Institute  
Public Health Foundation  
RDexpert Nutrition Consulting  
Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness  
Research!America  
Respiratory Health Association  
RI Collaborative for Interprofessional Education and Practice  
RiverStone Health  
Rosalind Franklin Society  
School Social Work Association of America  
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)  
Southeastern Regional Center of Excellence in Vector Borne Diseases  
Tacoma-Pierce County (WA) Health Department  
The Arizona Partnership for Immunization  
The Association of Accredited Public Health Programs  
The Bingham Program  
The Consortium  
The Praxis Project  
TickEncounter Resource Center (The University of Rhode Island)  
Trailhead Institute  
Training Resources Network, Inc.  
Tribal Health and Tribal Public Health  
Tri County (CO) Health Department  
Trust for America's Health  
UCLA Center for Health Advancement  
Vaccinate Your Family  
Washington State Department of Health  
Western Gulf Center of Excellence for Vector-borne Diseases  
West Valley Neighborhoods Coalition  
Women's Resource Center  
Young Marathon Runners of America

cc: Members of the House Energy & Commerce Committee

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<sup>i</sup> *Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey*. de Beaumont Foundation, 2018.

<http://www.debeaumont.org/ph-wins/>

<sup>ii</sup> *The Impact of Chronic Underfunding of America's Public Health System: Trends, Risks, and Recommendations*, 2019. Trust for America's Health, 2019. <https://www.tfah.org/report-details/2019-funding-report/>

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- iii *The Nation's Health Dollar (\$3.5 Trillion), Calendar Year 2017, Where It Went*. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 2018. <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/Downloads/PieChartSourcesExpenditures.pdf>
- iv Mamaril et al. *Estimating the Cost of Providing Foundational Public Health Services*. Academy Health PHSR Interest Group Meeting, June 25, 2016. [http://www.publichealthsystems.org/sites/default/files/presentations/NCCIntramural\\_Research/cbm%20poster\\_academyhealth\\_25Jun16.pdf](http://www.publichealthsystems.org/sites/default/files/presentations/NCCIntramural_Research/cbm%20poster_academyhealth_25Jun16.pdf)
- v Healthy People 2020, Public Health Infrastructure. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/public-health-infrastructure>
- vi *Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey*. de Beaumont Foundation, 2018. <http://www.debeaumont.org/ph-wins/>
- vii Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Life Expectancy. 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/life-expectancy.htm>
- viii Prager F, Wei D, Rose A. Total Economic Costs of an Influenza Outbreak in the United States. *Risk Analysis*. May 2016. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27214756>
- ix *The Return on Investment of Public Health System Spending*. Academy Health, 2018. [https://www.academyhealth.org/sites/default/files/roi\\_public\\_health\\_spending\\_june2018.pdf](https://www.academyhealth.org/sites/default/files/roi_public_health_spending_june2018.pdf)
- x Mays, Glen P. and Sharla A Smith. *Evidence Links Increases in Public Health Spending to Declines in Preventable Deaths*. Health Affairs, Vol 30, No. 8, 2011. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2011.0196>
- xi Masters, R et al. Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 71(8):827-34, 2017. <https://jech.bmj.com/content/71/8/827>