



Bridging **EVIDENCE** *and* **ACTION**

25 YEARS OF TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH



Table of Contents

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES.....3

BOARD CHAIR’S MESSAGE.....4

PRESIDENT AND CEO’S MESSAGE.....5

WHY TRUST FOR AMERICA’S HEALTH MATTERS NOW.....6

HOW TFAH WORKS.....8

MILESTONE TIMELINE.....12

SIX PILLARS OF TFAH’S WORK.....18

Pillar 1: Emergency Preparedness.....18

Pillar 2: Public Health Infrastructure and Funding.....22

Pillar 3: Chronic Disease, Obesity, and Nutrition.....26

Pillar 4: Mental Health, Substance Misuse Prevention, and Well-Being.....30

Pillar 5: Health Equity.....34

Pillar 6: Partnerships and Emerging Challenges36

VOICES OF IMPACT.....40

THE NEXT 25 YEARS.....44

JOIN US IN BUILDING THE NEXT 25 YEARS.....45

BACK MATTER.....46

Financial Stewardship.....46

2025 Funders.....47

Board of Directors.....47

Staff and Acknowledgments.....47

Mission, Vision, and Values

MISSION STATEMENT

Trust for America's Health promotes optimal health for every person and community and makes the prevention of illness and injury a national priority.

VISION STATEMENT

Trust for America's Health is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public health policy, research, and advocacy organization that envisions a nation that values the health and well-being of all and where prevention and health equity are foundational to policymaking at all levels of society.

VALUES

- Equity
- Independence
- Evidence-based
- Trust
- Partnerships
- Innovation
- Financial Stewardship

25 Years of Impact

For 25 years, TFAH has turned evidence into action—informing policy, strengthening public health systems, advancing prevention, and building trusted partnerships for a healthier America.



BOARD CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Stephanie K. Mayfield Gibson, M.D., FCAP

Chair of the TFAH Board of Directors

For 25 years, Trust for America's Health (TFAH) has championed effective public health policies that promote optimal health for every person and community. As an independent, nonpartisan organization, TFAH has become a catalyst for public health solutions and a trusted voice when it comes to public health conversations at the national level.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, as Chair, I am delighted to share TFAH's accomplishments and impact throughout its history. This report demonstrates TFAH's important contributions to public health and features a timeline of key milestones, quotes from some of our partners, as well as a look at what's next for TFAH in the coming years.

In particular, the report explores six programmatic areas to which TFAH has significantly contributed, including: emergency preparedness; public health infrastructure and funding; chronic disease, obesity, and nutrition; mental health, substance misuse prevention, and well-being; health equity; and partnerships and emerging challenges.

As this report clearly demonstrates, TFAH is a trusted and respected thought leader and public health advocate, often called upon for its expertise, innovative perspectives, and policy recommendations. Heading into its next 25 years, TFAH is well positioned to continue turning public health evidence into policy action.

After nearly a decade on the TFAH Board of Directors, the last four years of which I have served as Chair, I will be stepping down from this role at the end of the year. I continue to be in awe of this organization's dedication to its mission and desire for change to achieve a healthier nation.

Dr. Octavio N. Martinez, Jr., Senior Associate Vice President and Executive Director of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, will succeed me, and I know he will be an excellent Chair and continue to propel TFAH forward in its advocacy to strengthen the nation's public health system and improve lives.

I would like to extend a special thank you to each of our Board members for their steadfast commitment to TFAH and partnership; to Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, our President and CEO, for her inspiring leadership; to the TFAH staff for their talent and passion; and to our entire community of partners and supporters.

As we reflect on 25 years of progress, we are grateful that TFAH remains financially strong. This strength is made possible by the philanthropic partners whose generosity, trust, and collaboration have sustained our work throughout the years. We rely exclusively on philanthropic support, which means your investment is essential to preserving our independence as a trusted advocate for public health. As we look ahead, growing our network of supporters will allow TFAH to continue to champion a stronger, healthier nation.

With your partnership, we look forward to advancing our work with policymakers; public health leaders and practitioners; allied organizations; leaders in other sectors, including healthcare and business; and others to strengthen the nation's health and well-being and make the prevention of illness and injury a national priority.



PRESIDENT AND CEO'S MESSAGE

J. Nadine Gracia, M.D., MSCE

President and CEO of TFAH

For 25 years, Trust for America's Health (TFAH) has worked at the intersection of public health and policy, helping turn evidence into action to improve the health of people and communities across the nation. The need for an independent, nonpartisan organization that can bring evidence to policy and help keep public health at the forefront is arguably greater today than when TFAH was founded in 2001. As we celebrate this milestone, we remain steadfast in our commitment to our mission of promoting optimal health for every person and community and making the prevention of illness and injury a national priority.

Our vision is of a nation that values the health and well-being of all and where prevention and health equity are foundational to policymaking. At a time of uncertainty and change, that vision—and the values that have guided TFAH throughout its history—provide an important anchor. They remind us not only what we are working toward, but how we must do the work: grounded in evidence, independence, trust, equity, innovation, and partnership.

This report tells the story of TFAH's sustained impact over the past quarter-century, impact that would not have been possible without our partners. We have not traveled this path alone. From helping lead the advocacy effort to establish the Prevention and Public Health Fund to serving as a trusted source of analysis and policy recommendations during major public health emergencies, TFAH has worked shoulder to shoulder with partners through moments of opportunity and times of challenge to strengthen public health systems, advance prevention, and improve the health of communities.

That bridge-building role is especially important today. The nation faces complex and interconnected issues—from chronic disease and emerging infectious diseases to climate-related health threats, mental health and substance misuse, persistent health inequities, emerging technologies, and healthy aging.

Addressing them will require credible evidence, practical policy solutions, sustained investment, and strong partnerships across sectors. And the stakes extend beyond health: strong public health systems also support community resilience, national security, and economic security.

As we look to the future, TFAH is focused on helping shape the next era of public health by advancing a bold vision for a stronger, more resilient governmental public health system. We know this work cannot be accomplished by any single organization, which is why partnership will be at the heart of our approach. By bringing diverse voices together and learning from communities and leaders across sectors, TFAH will help identify practical pathways toward a more durable, equitable, and future-ready public health system for the next 25 years and beyond.

I am deeply grateful to our Board of Directors for its service, commitment to our mission, and strategic guidance; to our funders and partners for their trust, support, and collaboration; and to the current and former members of the TFAH Team whose expertise, dedication, and passion have made this work possible. As we look ahead to the next 25 years, I am energized by what we can accomplish together—advancing evidence-based policy, strengthening partnerships, and building the public health system the nation needs and deserves.

Why Trust for America's Health Matters Now

The nation's public health system is in crisis and at an inflection point, and Trust for America's Health has a critical role to play. For 25 years, TFAH has served as an independent, nonpartisan leader and bridge between public health evidence and policy action, helping the country prepare for crises, prevent disease, advance equity, and build a healthier future for every person and community. Today, as public health infrastructure faces new pressures and trust in public health institutions and guidance continues to be tested, TFAH's role is essential.

TFAH connects evidence-based public health data, policy innovation, practical recommendations, and effective advocacy—and serves as a trusted voice in the nation's ongoing conversation about public health. By meeting complex health challenges with rigorous data, funding challenges with the case for sustained investment, and preventable health problems with clear, nonpartisan policy solutions, TFAH turns what is known into what gets done.

Founded in 2001, TFAH is both nimble enough to respond to immediate crises and durable enough to sustain long-arc work in prevention and health equity. TFAH's reports are known for their rigor and accessibility, and its convenings for their fresh insights and expertise. That's why TFAH is trusted across administrations and political contexts as a credible source of public health information and policy recommendations—and why it can connect the worlds of research, policy, advocacy, strategic communications, philanthropy, public agencies, and communities to advance practical solutions to the nation's most pressing public health challenges. Put simply: TFAH is a force multiplier in a field that affects every American.

Partnership has been integral to TFAH's impact throughout its 25-year history. Public health leaders

and practitioners, policymakers, funders, researchers, advocates, community organizations, healthcare leaders, businesses, and other partners have brought expertise, experience, reach, and leadership to the work—helping build coalitions, strengthen solutions, and turn evidence into action.

In this report, you'll learn more about TFAH's role in U.S. public health over the last 25 years—how it works, what it has achieved, and where it is headed. We'll explore six areas in which TFAH has made sustained contributions: Emergency Preparedness; Public Health Infrastructure and Funding; Chronic Disease, Obesity, and Nutrition; Mental Health, Substance Misuse Prevention, and Well-Being; Health Equity; and Partnerships and Emerging Challenges. You'll also hear directly from partners and colleagues who have shared in this work—and together, we'll look ahead to the next 25 years.

For 25 years, TFAH has strengthened the nation's response to some of the most critical public health challenges while advancing prevention and equity. The next era of public health will require exactly the kind of trusted, evidence-based, nonpartisan leadership TFAH was built to provide.

“ Trust for America’s Health provides a steadfast North Star amid shifting political and social priorities at the federal, state, and local levels. TFAH functions as a stable, evidence-based reference point for the field. Its ongoing defense of comprehensive, upstream prevention policies is critical to maintaining national focus on long-term public health priorities, including emergency preparedness and chronic and infectious disease prevention.”

—JUDY MONROE, M.D.
President and CEO, CDC Foundation



*On May 22, 2019, John Auerbach, then President and CEO of TFAH, testified before the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce at its hearing, *LIFT America: Modernizing Our Infrastructure for the Future*, on provisions related to public health infrastructure.*

How TFAH Works

RESEARCH → POLICY → ADVOCACY → IMPACT

TFAH turns public health evidence into policy action. Across issues, TFAH analyzes data, identifies gaps, elevates promising solutions, and works with policymakers and partners to advance practical recommendations that can improve health.

The model is clear, consistent, and consequential. Partnership is woven through every stage of that model. TFAH brings its research, policy, advocacy, and communications expertise while working with multisector partners who bring their own knowledge, experience, reach, and leadership.



RESEARCH

TFAH draws on credible data, peer-reviewed research, interviews, and expert input to analyze current trends and conditions. TFAH's reports assess preparedness, prevention, chronic disease, infectious disease, substance misuse, suicide, health equity, infrastructure, climate-related health threats, healthy aging, and other pressing public health issues. Collaboration with external experts, national organizations, and partners working in communities is integral to TFAH's research. Their experience tests assumptions, sharpens findings, and helps ensure that the evidence reflects real-world conditions.



POLICY

TFAH translates evidence into actionable policy recommendations. That process includes analyzing existing and emerging challenges, assessing innovations from the field, engaging national organizations, subject-matter experts, partners working in communities, and federal agencies, and identifying opportunities for systemic change. TFAH also partners with federal agencies on initiatives that draw on the organization's research, policy expertise, and relationships across the public health field. Before advancing recommendations, TFAH works with experts, partners, and coalitions to test and refine them, ensuring they are credible, practical, and responsive to real-world needs.

“ TFAH was created to fill a void in public health advocacy. The most important service that TFAH provides is clear, honest, well-researched, fact-based information that policymakers can trust and use to create effective policies that help keep Americans healthy.”

—THEO SPENCER, M.J.

TFAH Co-Founder and Secretary of the Board of Directors



In 2016, TFAH staff and partners met with lawmakers and staff on Capitol Hill to advocate for the Prevention and Public Health Fund. Pictured from left to right: Jane Bigham, former Health Policy Advisor and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) detailee to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP); Pamela Joyner, former Director of the Office of Healthy and Safe Communities at the Washington State Department of Health; Julie Peterson, former Senior Director of Policy at the Foundation for Healthy Generations; Becky Salay, former Director of Government Relations at TFAH; and Rich Hamburg, former Deputy Director and Interim President and CEO at TFAH.



ADVOCACY

Once recommendations are developed, TFAH moves them into public debate and policy action. Through reports, congressional testimony, briefings, meetings with policymakers and staff, media engagement, convenings, webinars, coalitions, and learning communities, TFAH makes the case for evidence-based public health policies. Through technical assistance and other forms of partner support, TFAH also translates policy ideas into practice. TFAH's role is to make complex public health issues understandable, actionable, and relevant to decision-makers.



“ I always said TFAH was an evidence-based advocacy organization—that there was a think tank component and an advocacy component. That makes us more effective advocates. The think tank portion is often what opens the door for TFAH to talk to policymakers of all stripes within agencies and on the Hill.”

—JEFF LEVI, PH.D.

former TFAH Executive Director (2005–2015)



Pictured from left to right: former U.S. Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa and Dr. Jeff Levi, former Executive Director at TFAH, in a U.S. Senate hearing room.



IMPACT

The results are visible across TFAH's 25-year history. TFAH played a leading role in the development of, advocacy for, and defense of the Prevention and Public Health Fund; made the case for sustained investment in prevention and public health infrastructure, data modernization, workforce capacity, and preparedness; informed the 2022 White House National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, which cited TFAH's *State of Obesity* research and reflected several policy priorities TFAH had advanced; created and leads the Age-Friendly Public Health Systems initiative to elevate healthy aging as a core public health function; leads the Well Being Working Group to advance primary prevention of substance misuse and suicide; and co-founded—and continues to serve as a managing partner of—the Public Health Communications Collaborative, a resource for timely, clear, and effective public health messaging. TFAH has also been a trusted resource during major public health emergencies and inflection points, from the post-9/11 preparedness era to the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

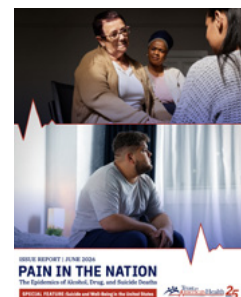
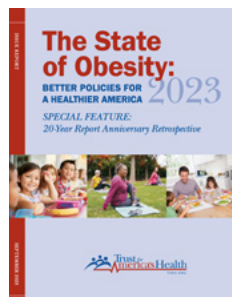
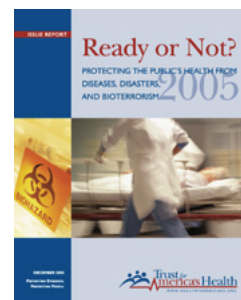
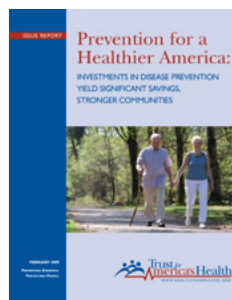
Through this model, TFAH shapes public health debates, informs policymakers, equips partners, defends public health infrastructure, and advances a healthier and more equitable future.



On March 10, 2020, as COVID-19 was emerging as a major public health threat, J. Nadine Gracia, M.D., MSCE, then TFAH Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, testified before the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery at a hearing on coronavirus preparedness and response.

SIGNATURE REPORTS, PRACTICAL IMPACT

TFAH reports translate complex public health data into accessible, policy-ready analysis. Across issue areas—preparedness, chronic disease and obesity, substance misuse and suicide, public health funding and infrastructure, and climate-related health threats—TFAH gives policymakers, advocates, and partners evidence and tools to measure progress and identify actions that can improve health.



Turning Public Health Evidence into Policy Action

A CONTINUOUS, EVIDENCE-BASED CYCLE

We learn, adapt, and keep building a healthier future.



CONVENINGS AND PARTNERSHIPS

COMMUNICATIONS



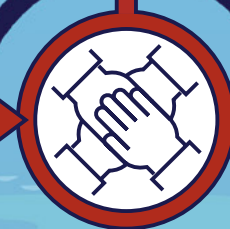
RESEARCH
Analyze data, trends,
and evidence.



POLICY
Develop practical
recommendations.



ADVOCACY
Engage policymakers,
partners, and
the public.



IMPACT
Advance healthier,
more equitable
communities.

Milestone Timeline

25 YEARS AT THE INTERSECTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND POLICY

2001

TFAH is founded amid a new era of health security

Trust for America's Health is created as an independent voice for public health, drawing on advocacy approaches that have advanced environmental health and other fields. Founding Executive Director Shelley Hearne is a driving force behind the organization's creation and early vision. TFAH launches with philanthropic support from the Rockefeller Family Fund, the Bauman Foundation, and the Benjamin Spencer Fund. The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, among others, provide additional funding to the organization in its early years, and TFAH remains supported solely through philanthropy. Founding President Lowell P. Weicker Jr., former U.S. Senator and Governor of Connecticut, lends the nonpartisan credibility that defines the organization. The September 11 and anthrax attacks soon underscore the central role of public health preparedness in national security and community resilience.



Draft Concept Paper for The Trust for America's Health

**An Advocacy Team Focused on Improving the Nation's Health by
Strengthening our Public Health Defenses.**

This paper lays the foundation for a new public health organization that will focus on rebuilding the country's capacity to protect the population's health and champion prevention strategies. Despite public health's substantial contributions to quality of life and life expectancy, we have an antiquated public health defense system—one that is unprepared to deal with today's health challenges, ranging from environmental threats to bioterrorism to reemerging infectious diseases.

Because of years of neglect, our public health system is in disarray. Twenty percent of local health departments still have rotary phones; 80% of public health officials have no public health training. There is no government agency tracking most chronic diseases. With no one watching our health, we are working in the dark when it comes to preventing disease outbreaks and eliminating dangerous exposures. With many chronic diseases steadily rising—now the leading cause of death in this country—we still have a public health system primarily oriented toward combating infectious diseases.

We lack an organized voice that challenges government to do a better job protecting our health and well-being. In this country, improvement only comes when questions are raised, public support is demonstrated and practical solutions are envisioned. The Trust for America's Health will be the force that brings public health to the forefront by advocating for environmental health.

The Trust will initially focus on environmental health issues as a mechanism to tap into broad public support and understanding. While the majority of Americans do not know what the word "public health" means, almost ninety percent believe that the environment plays an important role in causing disease. And the majority believe our public health system needs improvement. They will be the building base for increasing support for improving our public health system, which is described in detail below, as is the Trust's proposed organizational structure, budget and advisory board.



2002–2003

TFAH makes public health preparedness visible and measurable

TFAH's early preparedness work identifies gaps in the nation's public health systems and elevates the need for stronger state, local, and federal readiness.

“Being on the inside can only get you so far. You also need outside support. You need outside pressure to help move and advance policy—and sometimes to challenge the status quo. That is what Trust for America's Health was supposed to do, and does do.”

—SHELLEY HEARNE, DR.P.H.

TFAH Founding Executive Director
(2001–2005)

2003

Ready or Not becomes a signature accountability tool

TFAH launches what becomes its signature *Ready or Not* report series, assessing states' ability to protect residents from diseases, disasters, and bioterrorism and offering practical recommendations for improvement.

2006

PAHPA strengthens the national preparedness framework

The Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA) establishes a stronger federal framework for public health and medical readiness. TFAH is instrumental in the development of and advocacy for the legislation, including provisions related to accountability and measurement, clarification of federal leadership, and funding. TFAH continues to advocate for sustained preparedness funding and modernization.

2008

TFAH makes the case for prevention as an investment

TFAH releases *Prevention for a Healthier America*, demonstrating the health and economic value of investing in evidence-based community prevention. Along with TFAH's related research, briefs, and convenings, the report helps strengthen the evidence base for prevention and elevate it as a national policy and economic priority.

TFAH develops a policy roadmap for a healthier America

Through reports, policy briefs, convenings, and advocacy, TFAH builds the case for a stronger national commitment to prevention and population health. Its first *Blueprint for a Healthier America* brings that work together in an election-year policy roadmap for incoming administrations and Congress, offering evidence-based recommendations to strengthen prevention and modernize the nation's public health system.



2010

The Affordable Care Act creates the Prevention and Public Health Fund

TFAH champions the first mandatory federal funding stream dedicated to prevention and public health, building on recommendations in its first *Blueprint* report, and continues working to defend and strengthen the Prevention Fund against repeated threats.



2010s

TFAH shifts the conversation on chronic disease and obesity

Through the *State of Obesity* report series and related work, TFAH shifts the national discussion away from individual blame and toward prevention, policy, systems change, and healthier community conditions.



“ If you’re an incoming administration and someone hands you a package of research-supported policies with broad support, it’s potent. When Senator Tom Harkin was making the case for the Prevention Fund, he held up TFAH’s report on the Senate floor.”

—RICH HAMBURG, MPA

Former Executive Vice President and COO
and Interim President and CEO, TFAH
(served at TFAH, 2005–2018)

2017

Pain in the Nation reframes deaths from alcohol, drugs, and suicide

TFAH and Well Being Trust launch the *Pain in the Nation* report series, documenting rising deaths from alcohol, drugs, and suicide and advancing a prevention-focused policy agenda.

2017–2018

TFAH defines healthy aging as public health work

In partnership with The John A. Hartford Foundation, TFAH begins its Age-Friendly Public Health Systems initiative. Working with national, state, and local public health leaders, TFAH advances healthy aging as a core public health function, helping health departments support older adults through planning, prevention, and partnerships and build communities where people can age with health, dignity, and connection.



TFAH centers equity and expands state policy work

TFAH makes health equity more explicit across its vision, values, analysis, partnerships, and policy recommendations and also launches Promoting Health and Cost Control in States (PHACCS) to identify evidence-based state policies that can improve health, advance equity, and reduce healthcare costs.



“ It was a period of significant transition. TFAH was emerging from a decade of highly consequential leadership under Dr. Jeff Levi, and the organization had played a critical role in the passage of the Affordable Care Act. With that major achievement in place, there was an opportunity to consider what other health issues were emerging and where TFAH could make a difference. At the same time, the country was undergoing a significant political transition, and we did not know what changes might follow from that. These conditions created an opportunity for creativity and led to several new initiatives that reflected the emerging public health challenges of the time, such as those related to behavioral health, the health of older adults, and the impact of social and economic conditions on health.

—JOHN AUERBACH, MBA

Former TFAH President and CEO
(2017–2021)

TFAH creates the Well Being Working Group

TFAH launches a multisector coalition focused on promoting mental health and well-being and preventing substance misuse and suicide, aligning partners around upstream policy solutions.

2020

TFAH responds to the COVID-19 pandemic and underscores the consequences of underinvestment

As the pandemic strains public health systems nationwide, TFAH equips policymakers and partners with analysis, advocacy, and trusted information to understand and respond to the crisis.

TFAH co-founds the Public Health Communications Collaborative

TFAH, the de Beaumont Foundation, and the CDC Foundation launch PHCC to provide clear, science-based public health messaging during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Kresge Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are supporting partners from the start and later join as managing partners in 2022 and 2025, respectively. The collaborative subsequently expands its work beyond the pandemic.

TFAH deepens its climate-and-health preparedness work

Building on work dating to 2009, TFAH partners with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, expands its analysis of state readiness for climate-related health threats, and advances policies that help communities anticipate, prevent, and respond to risks such as extreme heat, poor air quality, flooding, and changing infectious disease patterns—connecting climate resilience to the broader work of building healthier, more equitable communities.



2020–2021

TFAH advances sustained public health infrastructure investment

TFAH helps develop and champion the Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act, which would provide annual funding through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to strengthen core public health infrastructure, and works with partners to advance major investments in public health infrastructure and data modernization through COVID-19 emergency response legislation.

2022

TFAH's *State of Obesity* research is cited in the national nutrition strategy

The White House National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health cites TFAH's *State of Obesity 2022: Better Policies for a Healthier America*, reflecting the report series' role in informing national policy discussions on obesity, chronic disease, and nutrition.

2023–2025

TFAH enters the courts to defend access to preventive services

For the first time in the organization's history, TFAH joins an amicus brief led by the American Public Health Association in federal litigation and goes on to participate in multiple briefs in the Braidwood case before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court. Across those filings, TFAH joins partners including the American Public Health Association, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, ChangeLab Solutions, and public health deans and scholars in making the public health case for preserving access to no-cost preventive services under the Affordable Care Act.

2025–2026

TFAH makes a rapidly changing federal public health landscape visible

TFAH's 2025 *Public Health Infrastructure in Crisis* report, its 2026 follow-up report, *Underfunded and Under Strain: The State of America's Public Health System*, and the *Public Health Programs Monitor* document significant changes in federal funding, staffing, programs, and operational capacity—giving policymakers, partners, and communities a clearer view of how federal decisions affect public health work in practice.

2026

TFAH enters the global stage

For the first time in its history, TFAH is granted special accreditation by the United Nations to participate as a nongovernmental organization in the UN High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response at United Nations Headquarters in New York City. This special accreditation reflects TFAH's engagement in public health preparedness and enables the organization to participate in the meeting.

TFAH marks 25 years of evidence, policy, advocacy, and impact

TFAH's 25th anniversary is a moment to reflect on a quarter-century of trusted leadership—and to look ahead to the next era of public health action.



PILLAR 1:

Emergency Preparedness

Preparing the Nation Before Health Crises Strike

The September 11 and anthrax attacks reshaped the nation's understanding of security, preparedness, and public health. These events made clear that protecting communities requires more than emergency response after a crisis begins; it requires strong public health systems, reliable data, modern laboratories, clear communications, and sustained readiness at every level of government.

Founded in 2001, Trust for America's Health quickly recognized that public health preparedness would be central to its mission. From its earliest work, TFAH made preparedness visible, measurable, and actionable—identifying gaps in state and federal capacity, translating evidence into policy recommendations, and providing policymakers with data and research to bolster their understanding that public health readiness is essential to national security, economic security, and community resilience.

TFAH's early preparedness work established the organization as an independent voice advocating for the systems communities need in place before emergencies strike. In 2002, TFAH released *Public Health Preparedness: Progress and Challenges Since September 11, 2001*, its first analysis of the government's response and the limitations of the public health system revealed by the September 11 and anthrax attacks. The report documented both the rapid actions public health officials took to limit harm and the significant gaps that remained, laying the groundwork for TFAH's *Ready or Not* report series.

That work soon became a signature part of TFAH's identity. In 2003, TFAH launched *Ready or Not*, which became its signature preparedness report series.

By assessing states' readiness to respond to public health emergencies, *Ready or Not* turned preparedness from an abstract goal into a measurable responsibility. Its state-by-state indicators gave policymakers, health officials, advocates, and communities a way to understand where progress was being made, where gaps remained, and what steps could improve readiness. By assessing preparedness over time, *Ready or Not* became an ongoing accountability tool—giving states a way to benchmark performance, track progress in key areas, and make a more concrete case for the investments needed to close gaps.

“Over 25 years, TFAH has built an enduring presence grounded in its foresight about emerging risks, challenges, and threats. It sticks with these issues through tough times, even when others step away because the work becomes too difficult. We saw this with COVID-19, just as we did with earlier national security threats such as 9/11, anthrax, and SARS. TFAH was there—and continues to be there—to tackle the toughest problems and find solutions. Public health preparedness and response capacity is one of those complex issues TFAH has championed over many years, helping the organization build deep trust with policymakers, partners, and the public health community.”

—VINCE VENTIMIGLIA, J.D.

Senior Advisor and former CEO, Leavitt Partners; TFAH Board Member; former Assistant Secretary for Legislation, HHS; former Policy Director, Senate Budget Committee; and former Health Policy Director, Senate HELP Committee



TFAH hosted a congressional briefing on its 2019 report, “Ready or Not: Protecting the Public’s Health from Diseases, Disasters and Bioterrorism.” Pictured from left to right: Dara Lieberman, Director of Government Relations, TFAH; Lori Upton, Director of Regional Preparedness and Operations, SouthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council; Dr. Celeste Philip, former Florida Surgeon General and Secretary of Health; and John Auerbach, then President and CEO, TFAH.

STORY SPOTLIGHT: *READY OR NOT* IN THE FIELD

For public health officials across the country, *Ready or Not* isn’t just a report—it’s a tool they return to year after year to benchmark progress, make the case for investment, and identify the gaps that need attention before the next emergency arrives.

“Preparedness is an ongoing responsibility, not a final destination, and our public health professionals work tirelessly every day to protect the health and safety of Alabama’s communities. Trust for America’s Health’s *Ready or Not* report serves as an essential resource in that mission, offering clear, actionable benchmarks that help Alabama measure its readiness and ensure our state, as well as the nation, is prepared. TFAH is a champion for sound policies that will help us keep our communities safe before, during, and after a crisis hits.”

—SCOTT HARRIS, M.D., MPH

State Health Officer, Alabama Department of Public Health

“New Jersey has made significant investments to ensure the state is ready to respond to public health emergencies. Because the threats to public health are constantly evolving, preparedness requires constant vigilance and a clear picture of the evolving landscape. That makes it critical to have trusted sources of independent information to understand the landscape of potential threats, set objective benchmarks for preparedness, and see the work we do in the context of other states in the region. Trust for America’s Health’s *Ready or Not* report is exactly that.”

—RAYNARD E. WASHINGTON, PH.D., MPH

Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Health

THE STAKES:

\$182.7 BILLION

In 2024, the United States experienced 27 weather and climate disasters that each caused more than \$1 billion in losses. Together, they cost an estimated \$182.7 billion and were associated with at least 568 deaths.

Weather and climate disasters are only one test of public health preparedness. For more than two decades, TFAH's *Ready or Not* series has assessed the nation's readiness for diseases, disasters, and bioterrorism and emphasized the need to build and sustain preparedness capacity before emergencies occur.

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Centers for Environmental Information, Assessing the U.S. Climate in 2024.

Preparedness has never been static. Over the past 25 years, the country has faced repeated tests: pandemic influenza, Ebola, Zika, COVID-19, measles outbreaks, H5N1 avian influenza, and a growing number of extreme weather events with serious health consequences. Each event has reinforced a core lesson of TFAH's work: the time to build public health capacity is before a crisis arrives.

Drawing on policy recommendations from the *Ready or Not* report series and other early TFAH reports on pandemic and infectious disease preparedness, TFAH was instrumental in the development of and advocacy for provisions ultimately included in the 2006 Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA), which strengthened the federal framework for public health and medical readiness during emergencies. TFAH has continued to advocate for sustained preparedness funding, modernization, and reauthorization—emphasizing that emergency readiness depends on strong systems, not temporary attention.

COVID-19 made that lesson unmistakable. The pandemic exposed the consequences of years of underinvestment in public health infrastructure, workforce, data systems, and communications capacity. It also underscored the importance of trusted, timely information. During the pandemic, TFAH joined

the de Beaumont Foundation and the CDC Foundation to launch the Public Health Communications Collaborative, supporting clear, science-based public health messaging at a moment of uncertainty, public confusion, and urgent need. The Kresge Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation also supported the early stages of PHCC and later joined as managing partners. The collaborative has since broadened its support for public health communicators beyond COVID-19. TFAH, in partnership with the National Medical Association and UnidosUS, also convened multisector partners and advanced policy recommendations to strengthen vaccine confidence, access, and equity.



Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, President and CEO of TFAH, speaks at the National Academy of Medicine's 2025 Climate and Health Summit.

MAKING THE CASE BEFORE CRISIS

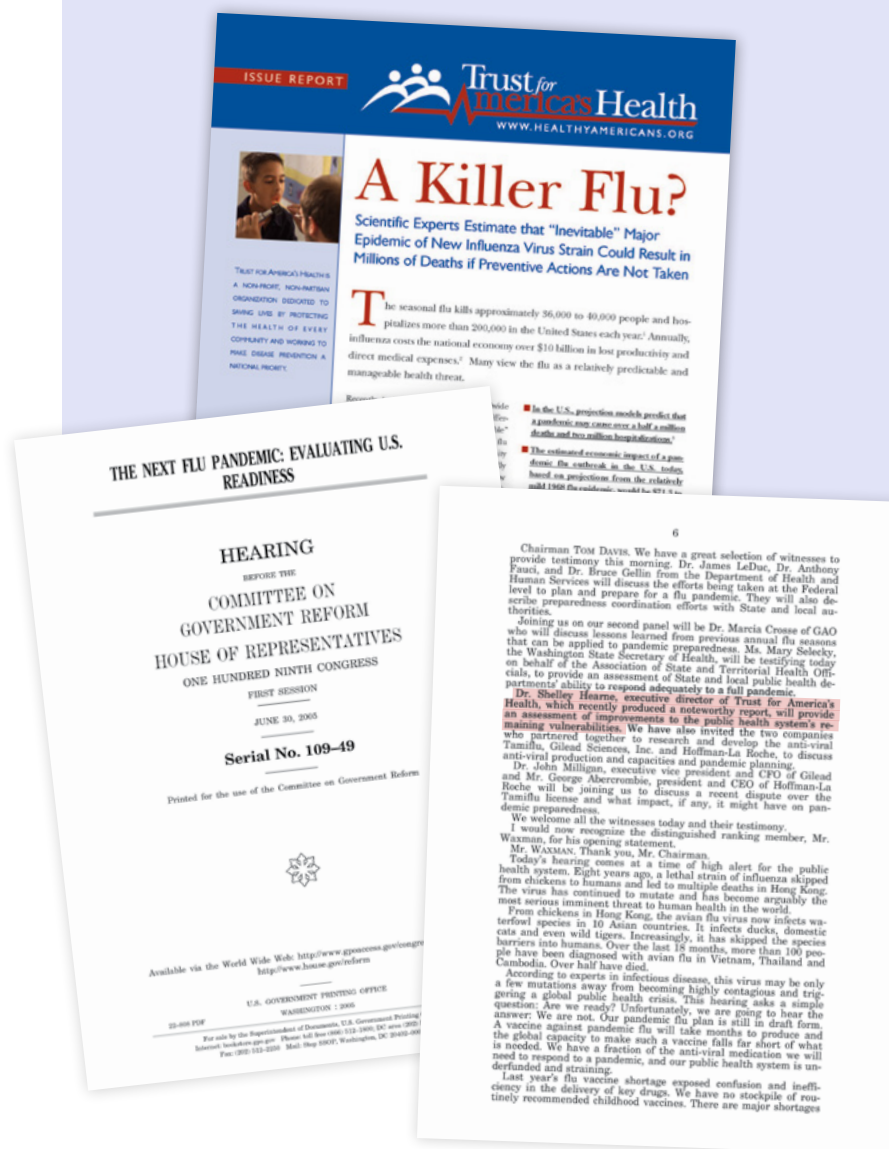
TFAH has long used scenario-based analysis to ensure policymakers understand what is at stake when preparedness systems are underfunded. In its 2005 report, *A Killer Flu? "Inevitable" Epidemic Could Kill Millions*, TFAH warned that a moderately severe pandemic flu could overwhelm hospitals, strain antiviral supplies, and cause widespread illness and death. The report underscored a message that remains central to TFAH's preparedness work: the country cannot wait until a crisis arrives to build the systems needed to protect health.

As TFAH marks its 25th anniversary, its founding commitment to preparedness is as relevant as ever. The threats have evolved—emerging infectious diseases, extreme weather, workforce shortages, and strained public health systems all present new challenges—but the core lesson of TFAH's 25 years of work remains unchanged: preparedness cannot be episodic. It must be built, maintained, tested, and strengthened over time.

By combining rigorous analysis, practical recommendations, nonpartisan advocacy, and trusted partnerships, TFAH strengthens the country's ability to prepare before emergencies strike and helps ensure that public health systems are ready, not merely reactive.



TFAH staff visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Pictured from left to right: Kevin McIntyre, then Associate Government Relations Manager at TFAH; Dara Lieberman, Director of Government Relations at TFAH; Daphne Delgado, then Senior Government Relations Manager at TFAH; Jonah C. Cunningham, then Government Relations Manager at TFAH; and Cecelia Thomas, then Senior Government Relations Manager at TFAH.



PILLAR 2:

Public Health Infrastructure and Funding

Strengthening and Sustaining the Systems That Protect Health

Public health is often most visible during emergencies. But the systems that protect health are built long before a crisis begins: laboratories, data systems, disease surveillance, communications capacity, community partnerships, grant programs, workforce pipelines, and the state, local, territorial, and tribal agencies that carry out public health work every day.

For 25 years, TFAH has elevated the visibility of those systems. Across administrations and Congresses, TFAH has made the case that public health infrastructure is not optional—it is the foundation that allows the country to prevent disease, respond to emergencies, reduce healthcare costs, advance equity, and protect communities.

That case has not always been easy to make. Public health funding has too often followed a familiar pattern: attention and emergency dollars surge after a crisis, then decline when the crisis fades from public view. TFAH has consistently warned that this boom-and-bust cycle leaves the country less prepared, forcing public health agencies to rebuild capacity again and again rather than sustaining the workforce and systems communities need.

TFAH's funding and infrastructure work has helped policymakers and partners understand public health capacity as more than a budget issue—as the foundation for preparedness, prevention, and equity. Strong public health systems need skilled workers, modern data tools, reliable laboratories, clear communications, flexible funding, and the ability to work with communities before, during, and after crises.

One of TFAH's most important infrastructure priorities has been sustained federal investment in prevention and public health. TFAH was instrumental in the development of and advocacy for the Prevention and Public Health Fund, created by the Affordable Care Act as the nation's first mandatory funding stream dedicated to prevention and public health. TFAH's research, coalition-building, and sustained advocacy helped build the policy foundation for the Prevention Fund and advance prevention as a funded national priority.

Since then, TFAH has continued to lead efforts to defend and strengthen the Fund, emphasizing that investments in evidence-based prevention can save lives, improve health, and, in some cases, reduce costs while supporting essential public health work in states and communities. TFAH's advocacy efforts have included organizing Hill days with partner organizations, developing state-by-state fact sheets to help lawmakers understand the impact of the Fund in their jurisdictions, leading sign-on letters that have drawn support from hundreds of national and state organizations, supporting a Senate Dear Colleague series, and leading coalition meetings and calls to action.



During the 2025 National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity Hill Day, Madison West, former TFAH Government Relations Manager, joined coalition partners for a meeting with U.S. Representative Rick Allen of Georgia's 12th District.

That leadership in prevention was also recognized at the federal level. In 2011, President Barack Obama appointed Jeff Levi, Ph.D., then TFAH's Executive Director, to the Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health, where he served as chair, bringing TFAH's perspective on prevention and population health to national policy discussions.

TFAH has also been a leading voice for rebuilding and modernizing public health infrastructure more broadly. For example, the development of federal policy recommendations through TFAH's Blueprint report series has been driven not only by evidence but also by national convenings of leaders and thought partners across sectors. Through reports, testimony, briefings, appropriations analysis, coalition work, and direct engagement with policymakers, TFAH has explained why public health capacity cannot be measured by appropriations alone. Funding levels matter, but so do staffing, grant administration, technical assistance, data systems, operational continuity, and the ability of federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies to turn resources into action.

"A major challenge for modernizing our public health system is the boom-and-bust cycle of public health funding. We neglect public health funding until a crisis occurs, then there is an infusion of funds, followed by another cycle of neglect. We try to be a persistent voice showing that we need to sustain funding for public health every day, not just during a crisis." —Dara Lieberman, MPP, Director of Government Relations, TFAH



At TFAH's October 2024 briefing on "Pathway to a Healthier America: A Blueprint for Strengthening Public Health for the Next Administration and Congress," former U.S. Secretaries of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius and Michael O. Leavitt discussed the path forward for the nation's health and health security, with Secretary Leavitt joining virtually.



Dr. Tekisha Dwan Everette, Executive Vice President of TFAH, speaks at a briefing at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, to discuss the 2024 report, "Pathway to a Healthier America: A Blueprint for Strengthening Public Health for the Next Administration and Congress."

“ When I think back on major public health wins during my time on Capitol Hill, one that stands out is our work to advance public health infrastructure. TFAH had been developing a major proposal for years. By the time it reached the Senate HELP Committee, we were able to draw on TFAH's expertise, along with the work of public health departments and experts across the country, and build it into a proposal that could gain traction. That work helped lead to significant investments in public health infrastructure. I look back with so much pride on what we accomplished in partnership with TFAH and what it meant for strengthening our country's public health infrastructure.”

—ANDI LIPSTEIN FRISTEDT, MPA

Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy and Policy Officer, Parkinson's Foundation, and former Deputy Health Policy Director for the U.S. Senate HELP Committee

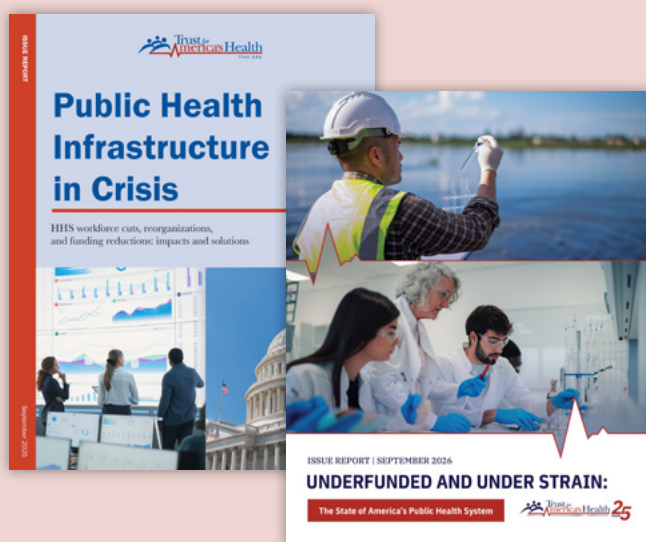
STORY SPOTLIGHT: MAKING PUBLIC HEALTH CAPACITY VISIBLE

TFAH's recent funding and infrastructure reports show policymakers and partners what public health infrastructure really means: the people, systems, relationships, and operational capacity that turn public health goals into action.

In 2025, TFAH's *Public Health Infrastructure in Crisis* report documented how federal funding instability, workforce disruption, grant disruptions, and federal capacity challenges were straining the nation's public health system. The report framed a critical point: public health agencies depend on people, systems, and relationships—and when those systems are disrupted, communities feel the effects.

TFAH's 2026 follow-up report, *Underfunded and Under Strain: The State of America's Public Health System*, built on that work with a deeper analysis of the gap between appropriations and operational capacity. It examined how staffing, grant administration, technical assistance, data systems, program continuity, and federal-state coordination shape whether enacted funding translates into sustained operational capacity.

Together, these reports gave policymakers and partners a clearer framework for understanding what topline appropriations can obscure: public health capacity depends on people, systems, relationships, and operational continuity.



WHAT TFAH HAS HELPED ADVANCE

STABLE PREVENTION FUNDING

TFAH has advocated to protect and strengthen dedicated prevention investments, including the Prevention and Public Health Fund and CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, so states and communities can support long-term strategies rather than relying only on short-term crisis funding.

A STRONG PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE

TFAH has made the case for sustained workforce investments so public health systems at every level have the staff, expertise, and leadership needed to carry out core public health functions.

MODERN DATA SYSTEMS

TFAH has elevated the need for timely, interoperable, and secure public health data systems that allow agencies to detect threats, understand disparities, guide resources, and communicate clearly with the public.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Through budget analysis, state comparisons, policy recommendations, and public reporting, TFAH equips policymakers and advocates to see where investments are going, where gaps remain, and what is needed to strengthen the system.

Public health infrastructure is the backbone of every other public health goal. Emergency preparedness, chronic disease prevention, behavioral health, health equity, climate resilience, healthy aging, and community well-being all depend on systems that are adequately funded, staffed, modernized, and trusted.

As TFAH looks to the next 25 years, it will continue working toward a strong, resilient, trusted, and equitable public health system—one supported by durable funding, modern infrastructure, and a workforce with the capacity to protect every community. The country cannot build that future through episodic attention and unstable investment; it needs public health infrastructure that can prevent problems before they grow, respond quickly when threats emerge, and support every community in achieving better health.

TFAH makes that case—connecting evidence, budgets, policy, and real-world capacity so public health systems have the resources and support they need to protect people every day.

“TFAH looks at things from a broader public health systems perspective. We may look at issues through a laboratory science and practice lens, but it really helps to have TFAH in the rooms where policy gets made to help elevate what we may be doing at a more technical level.”

—SCOTT BECKER, MS

Chief Executive Officer, Association of Public Health Laboratories

THE STAKES:

3%

Government public health activities account for only about 3 percent of total U.S. health spending—a small share of national health investment despite public health’s central role in preventing disease and injury, promoting health, responding to emergencies, and protecting communities.

This persistent imbalance explains why TFAH has spent 25 years making the case for sustained investment in the workforce, data systems, laboratories, and other infrastructure that protect communities.

Source: TFAH analysis of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, National Health Expenditure Accounts: National Health Expenditures by Type of Service and Source of Funds, CY 1960–2024.

PILLAR 3:

Chronic Disease, Obesity, and Nutrition

Changing the Conditions That Shape Health

Chronic disease is one of the nation's most persistent public health challenges. Conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity affect millions of families, shorten lives, and place enormous pressure on healthcare systems and costs. Their burdens are not evenly shared: persistent inequities in access to nutritious food, safe places to be active, quality healthcare, economic opportunity, and other health-promoting conditions contribute to avoidable differences in chronic disease rates and outcomes.

For too long, public conversations about obesity and chronic disease focused narrowly on individual choices. TFAH helped broaden that frame. Through the *State of Obesity* report and related work, TFAH has broadened policymakers', advocates', and partners' understanding of how health is shaped by

the conditions around people—including access to affordable, nutritious food, safe places to be active, stable housing, transportation, income, education, and the policies that shape community life.

That shift matters. When chronic disease is treated only as a matter of personal responsibility, policy solutions are limited. When it is understood as a prevention, equity, and systems challenge, the possibilities expand: healthier school meals, safer streets, stronger nutrition programs, active transportation, community-based prevention, food access, and policies that make healthy choices easier to make and sustain.

THE STAKES:

90%

About 90 percent of annual U.S. healthcare expenditures are for people with chronic and mental health conditions—underscoring the enormous human and economic burden of chronic and mental health conditions.

This burden is why TFAH has worked to move chronic disease policy upstream—from treating illness after it occurs to improving the policies, systems, and community conditions that make good health possible.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Fast Facts: Health and Economic Costs of Chronic Conditions*, May 26, 2026.



TFAH hosted an event at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, on October 11, 2023, recognizing 20 years of its annual obesity report series and discussing findings from “State of Obesity 2023: Better Policies for a Healthier America.” Pictured from left to right: TFAH Board members Dr. Umair Shah and Dr. David Lakey; TFAH President and CEO Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, TFAH Board member Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, and TFAH Board Vice Chair Dr. David Fleming.

TFAH’s *State of Obesity* report series became a signature tool in that shift. By combining state-level data with policy analysis and practical recommendations, the reports made obesity and chronic disease prevention more visible, measurable, and actionable. They gave policymakers and advocates a credible source for understanding trends, identifying disparities, and advancing evidence-based solutions.

Over time, TFAH’s chronic disease work connected issues that are too often treated separately: nutrition, physical activity, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, health equity, and the social and economic conditions that shape health. The organization’s analysis documented that prevention is not a single program or campaign; it is a long-term strategy for building healthier communities.

TFAH has also translated evidence into federal and state policy opportunities. Its work has elevated strategies such as improving school nutrition, expanding access to healthy foods, supporting safe routes for walking and biking, and investing in community-based prevention. Across these areas, TFAH’s contribution has been to make the policy case for prevention—grounded in data, equity, and practical recommendations.

In 2023, President Joe Biden appointed TFAH President and CEO J. Nadine Gracia, M.D., MSCE, to the President’s Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition, providing another opportunity to bring public health expertise to national efforts related to nutrition, physical activity, and chronic disease prevention.



Dr. J. Nadine Gracia moderates a panel on sports leagues partnerships at the 2024 annual meeting of the President’s Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition. Pictured on stage with Dr. Gracia: Nicole Breen, NBA and WNBA, and Jonathan Nabavi, NFL.

STORY SPOTLIGHT: FROM STATE OF OBESITY TO NATIONAL STRATEGY

TFAH's chronic disease and obesity work has informed national policy conversations. The 2022 White House National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health cited TFAH's *State of Obesity 2022: Better Policies for a Healthier America*, reflecting the report series' role as a credible source for policymakers addressing nutrition, chronic disease, and prevention. In advance of the strategy's release, TFAH advocated for expanding CDC's State Physical Activity and Nutrition program (SPAN), a longstanding TFAH policy priority; the final strategy called for expanding SPAN to all states and territories.

The strategy's focus on nutrition security, physical activity, prevention, and reducing diet-related disease reflects many of the priorities TFAH has long elevated: healthier communities require more than individual behavior change; they require policies and systems that make health possible.

WHAT TFAH HAS HELPED ADVANCE

HEALTHIER SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

TFAH has made the case for stronger school nutrition standards, working with public health, education, healthcare, parent organizations, and other partner organizations to support evidence-based school-meal policies and recognize schools as important settings for prevention and lifelong health.

SAFER PLACES TO WALK AND BIKE

TFAH has elevated Complete Streets and Safe Routes approaches that make walking, biking, and physical activity safer and more accessible for children and adults.

NUTRITION SECURITY AND FOOD ACCESS

TFAH has connected chronic disease prevention to policies that improve access to affordable, nutritious food—including efforts to reduce food insecurity, strengthen nutrition programs, and address the community conditions that drive diet-related disease.

COMMUNITY-BASED OBESITY PREVENTION

TFAH has been a leading advocate for sustained investment in CDC's SPAN and Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) programs, which give states and communities resources to improve nutrition, increase physical activity, prevent chronic disease, and reduce health disparities.

CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION REMAINS ESSENTIAL TO THE NATION'S HEALTH AND ECONOMIC FUTURE

TFAH continues to make the case that some of the most consequential investments in health happen long before illness occurs—in the policies, systems, and community conditions that give everyone an opportunity to thrive.



In 2012, TFAH and Healthy Schools Campaign presented policy recommendations that would form the basis of “Health in Mind” to federal leaders. Pictured from left to right: Kathleen Sebelius, 21st U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services; Rochelle Davis, Founder and former President and CEO of Healthy Schools Campaign; Dr. Gail C. Christopher, former Chair of the TFAH Board of Directors; Arne Duncan, 9th U.S. Secretary of Education; and Dr. Jeff Levi.

“ Addressing the obesity epidemic and advancing health equity require a strong systems-oriented foundation—one in which rigorous research across the spectrum of relevant disciplines is consistently assessed and translated into actionable policy at the national, state, and local levels. For years, Trust for America’s Health’s *State of Obesity* report has been a critical, reliable public health resource in this respect, helping to shift policy conversations away from individual blame and toward the historical context, social and economic conditions, and other neighborhood-level factors that shape health. By pairing evidence with practical policy recommendations, TFAH helps policymakers and advocates understand both the scale of the challenge and the opportunities for action.”

—SHIRIKI K. KUMANYIKA, PH.D., MPH

Emeritus Professor of Epidemiology, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine

PILLAR 4:

Mental Health, Substance Misuse Prevention, and Well-Being

Preventing Substance Misuse and Suicide

Deaths from drugs, alcohol, and suicide are among the nation's most urgent and tragic public health challenges. They affect families and communities in every part of the country and reflect more than individual behavior or clinical need. They are shaped by trauma, social isolation, economic stress, community conditions, access to care, and the policies and systems that influence health and well-being across a lifetime.

TFAH brought a public health prevention lens to this crisis. Through the *Pain in the Nation* report series and related work, TFAH has worked to change how policymakers, advocates, and partners understand deaths from alcohol, drugs, and suicide as preventable population-health challenges—and has advanced strategies that address root causes, reduce risk, strengthen protective factors, and connect people to support before a crisis occurs.

Launched with Well Being Trust in 2017, *Pain in the Nation* has become a signature resource for understanding the scale and drivers of these deaths. The report series brings together data on alcohol-induced deaths, drug overdoses, and suicide; identifies trends across states and populations; and offers policy recommendations rooted in prevention, equity, resilience, and community well-being.

Just as important, *Pain in the Nation* helped change the conversation. It showed that rising deaths from alcohol, drugs, and suicide were not isolated problems to be addressed one program at a time. They were connected public health challenges requiring a comprehensive response—including prevention, treatment, recovery supports, harm reduction, suicide prevention, trauma-informed approaches, stronger data systems, and policies that improve the conditions in which people live.



One of the enduring contributions of *Pain in the Nation* is how it shifted the public and policymaker discourse away from individual-level choices and individual-level solutions and broadened the discussion to include the structural and community factors that shape mental health and well-being.”

—SANA CHEHIMI, MPH

Managing Director of Policy, Narrative & Partnerships, Prevention Institute

STORY SPOTLIGHT: GIVING POLICYMAKERS A PREVENTION ROADMAP

For policymakers and advocates working at the intersection of behavioral health, public health, and prevention, *Pain in the Nation* offers both evidence and language for action.

“When I saw the first *Pain in the Nation* report, I reached out to TFAH and said, ‘Come meet with me,’” says Jonah C. Cunningham, MPP, then a congressional staffer and now President and CEO of the National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors. “The data was that revealing. The report gave us a path forward and language we could use and showed us what prevention could look like.”

That combination—rigorous data, clear framing, and actionable recommendations—reflects TFAH’s broader role. TFAH does not simply describe public health problems; it highlights for policymakers and partners where prevention is possible and what solutions are within reach.

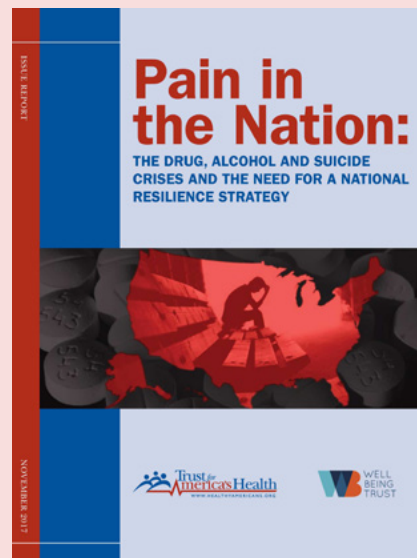
TFAH has also built and sustained a broader prevention coalition through the Well Being Working Group, a multisector table focused on the primary prevention of mental health conditions, substance misuse, and suicide. The group brings together organizations from public health, behavioral health, substance misuse prevention, suicide prevention, healthcare, advocacy, and other fields to align around upstream policy solutions and long-term well-being.

Through this work, TFAH has elevated the importance of preventing crisis before it occurs. That means strengthening the conditions that protect mental health and well-being: safe and connected communities, economic stability, supportive schools, access to care, reduced stigma, culturally responsive services, and policies that address trauma and inequity.

“ Trust for America’s Health has long championed the importance of prevention and the conditions that support health and well-being. Its Well Being Working Group plays a vital role in convening partners to advance population-level policies that promote mental health and well-being and prevent substance misuse, suicide, adverse childhood experiences, and other behavioral health challenges. Through rigorous analysis, steadfast advocacy, and a commitment to equity, the organization has helped leaders across government understand that protecting the public’s health is both a moral responsibility and a strategic imperative.”

—PAUL BONTA, MA

Director of Government Relations, Safe States Alliance



WHAT TFAH HAS HELPED ADVANCE

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Through *Pain in the Nation* and the Well Being Working Group, TFAH has advanced policy approaches that reduce risk and strengthen protective factors before substance misuse, suicide risk, or mental health crises escalate.

HARM REDUCTION AND TREATMENT ACCESS

TFAH has built support for evidence-based strategies that reduce overdose deaths, connect people to treatment and recovery supports, and recognize substance use disorder as a health condition.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND CRISIS RESPONSE

TFAH has elevated the need for comprehensive suicide prevention strategies, including stronger crisis systems, community-based prevention, and supports that reach people before moments of acute crisis. For example, TFAH has advocated for strengthening the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and the broader continuum of crisis services, including by working with partners to recommend improvements to 988 implementation.

DATA SYSTEMS THAT GUIDE ACTION

TFAH has supported stronger surveillance and data systems for communities to track fatal and nonfatal overdoses, suicide deaths and attempts, and other harms; understand who is most affected; and identify which interventions are needed.

TRAUMA-INFORMED AND COMMUNITY-CENTERED PREVENTION

TFAH has connected behavioral health and substance misuse prevention to adverse childhood experiences, trauma, social connection, and the community conditions that shape long-term well-being.

THE STAKES:

16%

The combined age-adjusted death rate from alcohol-induced causes, drug overdoses, and suicide declined by 16 percent from 2023 to 2024—a sign of meaningful progress after two decades of rising mortality. But rates remain high, and progress has been uneven across populations and communities.

Through *Pain in the Nation* and the Well Being Working Group, TFAH translates these trends into a prevention-focused policy agenda and makes the case for sustaining the systems and supports that can prevent harm before it occurs.

Source: Trust for America's Health, *Pain in the Nation 2026: The Epidemics of Alcohol, Drug, and Suicide Deaths*, analysis of National Center for Health Statistics mortality data.

Over the next 25 years, TFAH will build on this foundation by keeping primary prevention at the center of mental health and substance-misuse policy; strengthening the data, partnerships, and community conditions that support well-being; and ensuring that

recent progress becomes durable and equitable. TFAH's work will continue to advance a public health approach that recognizes well-being as something built in communities, not only in clinics.



PILLAR 5:

Health Equity

Advancing Equity as Core Public Health Practice

From its earliest work on prevention, preparedness, chronic disease, and community conditions, TFAH has focused on the systems that shape health. Over time, the organization has made equity more explicit across its vision, values, research, partnerships, and policy recommendations—moving health equity from aspiration to practice.

Health outcomes are not shaped by individual choices alone. They are shaped by the conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, and age: access to quality healthcare, safe housing, nutritious food, economic opportunity, clean air and water, transportation, education, and protection from discrimination and exclusion. Too often, these conditions differ sharply by race, ethnicity, income, geography, disability, age, and other factors, producing preventable gaps in health and life expectancy.

TFAH helps policymakers, advocates, and partners understand those differences not as inevitable, but as shaped by systems, structures, and policy choices—and therefore as something public policy can help change. That perspective has become central to TFAH's work: defining public health problems clearly, using data to reveal inequities, identifying root causes, and advancing policy solutions that give all communities a fair opportunity to be healthy.

TFAH's 2018 strategic plan marked an important turning point in this evolution. Building on the organization's longstanding focus on prevention and the conditions that shape health, the plan made health equity more explicit in TFAH's vision and values and strengthened its commitment to embedding equity across its issue areas—not as a standalone topic, but as a core part of how public health problems are understood and addressed.

“Health equity is not a standalone issue—it is a way of asking whether our systems work fairly for everyone. It shapes the questions we ask, the data we examine, the partners we engage, and the solutions we advance across every area of TFAH's work.” — Tekisha Dwan Everette, Ph.D., MPA, MPH, CPH, Executive Vice President, TFAH.

That practical understanding has shaped TFAH's approach. Across reports and advocacy, TFAH has pushed for better data, stronger investments, community-centered solutions, and policies that address the social, economic, and environmental factors that drive inequities. TFAH has applied a health equity lens across preparedness, chronic disease prevention, behavioral health, climate resilience, aging, public health infrastructure, and the everyday systems that shape health.



In 2026, TFAH visited Puerto Rico to learn about local public health needs and met with representatives of Taller Comunidad La Goyco and Emergemos. Pictured from left: Dr. J. Nadine Gracia; Dr. Maribel Campos Rivera, Founder and CEO, Emergemos; Dr. María Victoria García Cingolani, Clinical Psychologist and Psychoanalyst, La Goyco; Mariana Reyes Angleró, Executive Director, La Goyco; Johanna Domínguez, Community Wellness Coordinator, La Goyco; and Ilse Argueta, MPH, Policy Development Manager, TFAH.

“ We didn’t want equity to be an also. We wanted it to be a must. Centering equity was both a beacon and a call to action for the broader field of public health.”

—GAIL C. CHRISTOPHER, D.N.

Executive Director, National Collaborative for Health Equity;
former Chair of the TFAH Board of Directors (2012–2022)

POLICY IN PRACTICE: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN EQUITY

TFAH has also elevated and advocated for programs that put equity into practice at the community level. For example, TFAH has long supported CDC’s Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health program, known as REACH, which funds community-driven strategies to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities.

Programs like REACH recognize that communities are experts in their own needs and assets. They support locally tailored approaches to improving nutrition, increasing physical activity, preventing chronic disease, improving connections to preventive and chronic-disease services, and addressing barriers that contribute to unequal health outcomes.

TFAH’s advocacy for REACH and other targeted investments that aim to reduce disparities reflects a broader principle: public health policy works best when it is shaped by evidence, informed by communities, and focused on the conditions that make health possible.

As TFAH looks ahead to its next 25 years, health equity remains central to its mission and methods. Equity shapes the questions TFAH asks, the data it analyzes, the partners it engages, and the recommendations it advances. It is not a separate lane of work; it is a measure of whether public health systems are fulfilling their purpose.

By making equity more explicit, actionable, and embedded in public health policy, TFAH continues to advance a simple but powerful idea: everyone should have a fair and just opportunity for optimal health.

STORY SPOTLIGHT: PAIRING HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EVIDENCE TO DRIVE STATE POLICY

TFAH puts this approach into practice through Promoting Health and Cost Control in States, or PHACCS, which helps state policymakers identify evidence-based policies that can improve health, advance equity, and reduce healthcare costs.

Drawing on a review of more than 1,500 policies, programs, and strategies from national databases, PHACCS brings together health and economic evidence and translates research on nonmedical drivers of health into concrete policy options for states. Across its three reports, the initiative has examined policies spanning early childhood and school environments, housing stability, economic mobility, access to healthcare, active living, harm reduction, and tobacco and alcohol policy—while also identifying strategies states and their partners can use to advance health-promoting policies in changing policy and fiscal environments.

“PHACCS exists because state policymakers don’t need another report telling them inequities exist—they need a roadmap for what to do about it,” says Breanca Merritt, Ph.D., Director of Policy, TFAH. “Even amid real fiscal constraints, leaders are finding ways to advance health-promoting policies that fit their states, including bipartisan and community-driven approaches.”

The initiative reflects a central TFAH contribution: translating health, economic, and equity evidence into policy options decision-makers can use. By showing that many of the same strategies can improve health, reduce inequities, and control costs, PHACCS makes clear that equity is not separate from effective public health policy; it is an integral part of what makes policy effective. Through convenings that engage cross-sector partners and community advocates, the initiative further informs policy change by illuminating the realities of implementing these efforts in increasingly complex state policy environments.

PILLAR 6:

Partnerships and Emerging Challenges

Building Trust Across Sectors

Today's public health challenges rarely fit neatly within one agency, discipline, or sector. Infectious disease threats, climate-related emergencies, chronic disease, mental health, aging, and community resilience all require partners who can work across boundaries—connecting public health with healthcare, philanthropy, employers, the business community, aging services, education, housing, transportation, communications, and community leadership.

TFAH has long understood that public health progress depends on trusted partnerships. Across its work, TFAH both leads and supports partnerships—building and steering coalitions, facilitating learning communities, convening partners with different forms of expertise, and contributing its research, policy, advocacy, and communications capacity to collaborations led by others. TFAH's partnerships are grounded in the

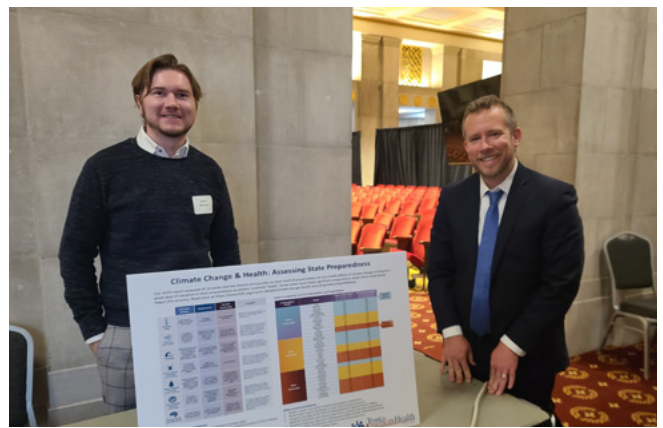
recognition that no single organization or sector can meet the nation's public health challenges alone.

That role has become increasingly important as public health issues have grown more complex and trust in public health institutions and guidance has become harder to sustain. TFAH's nonpartisan voice allows the organization to convene partners with different perspectives around shared goals: preventing illness, strengthening systems, advancing equity, and improving the conditions that allow communities to thrive.

TFAH's partnership model is practical and repeatable. The organization identifies emerging public health needs, grounds its work in evidence, brings key partners to the table, translates complexity into usable guidance, and provides policymakers, practitioners, funders, and community leaders with the evidence and policy recommendations to move from concern to action.



In 2025, TFAH visited the Baltimore City Health Department to learn about the comprehensive public health services it provides to the community. Health Commissioner Michelle Taylor, M.D., Dr.P.H., MPA (pictured front right) and her team shared examples of the department's work.



TFAH staff Kevin McIntyre, Senior Government Relations Manager, and Matt McKillop, Associate Director of Policy Research (pictured from left to right), shared key recommendations from "Climate Change & Health: Assessing State Preparedness" at Healing Our Planet: A Call to Action on Climate and Health Inequities, a 2023 event jointly hosted by the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service Office of Public Health and the University of New Mexico Project ECHO. The report was developed in partnership with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

STORY SPOTLIGHT: CLEAR COMMUNICATION IN A TIME OF CRISIS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public health leaders faced not only a fast-moving infectious disease threat but also a communications crisis. Communities needed clear, accurate, and timely information. Public health officials needed practical tools to explain the science as knowledge and understanding of the novel virus evolved, answer questions, and respond to confusing information and misinformation.

In August 2020, TFAH met that need by joining with the de Beaumont Foundation and the CDC Foundation to launch the Public Health Communications Collaborative (PHCC). The Kresge Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation also supported the early stages of PHCC and later joined as managing partners. PHCC provided timely, science-based messaging resources during the pandemic and has since broadened its work, creating practical tools, messaging, and training that strengthen the communications capacity of public health professionals.

The collaborative reflects TFAH's broader value: recognizing a field-wide need, building the right partnership, and translating evidence into tools people could use. Its work also reinforced a central lesson of the pandemic—that effective public health depends not only on data and policy but also on trust, communication, and relationships.

“ Being new to my position and the area, people were looking to me for information. Measles was a hot topic, so it was really helpful to be able to call local school nurses, introduce myself, and share information. PHCC resources gave me the confidence and knowledge base I needed.”

—LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR

EMERGING OPPORTUNITY: HEALTHY AGING AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PRIORITY

As Americans live longer and healthier lives, public health systems have essential roles to play in supporting health across the lifespan. As a result of a convening co-hosted with The John A. Hartford Foundation in Florida, TFAH identified healthy aging as a critical, underdeveloped priority for public health. In continued partnership with The John A. Hartford Foundation, TFAH has advanced age-friendly public health systems—equipping health departments to work with partners across sectors to support older adults, promote prevention, and build communities where people can age with health, dignity, and connection.

This movement has shaped and reinforced public health's critical role in healthy aging by convening leaders in the field and across sectors. Healthy aging is not only a healthcare issue; it is shaped by housing, transportation, social connection, nutrition, emergency preparedness, caregiving, chronic disease prevention, and the ability of communities to support people across the lifespan. By promoting public health engagement in multisector partnerships, TFAH strengthens systems that meet the needs of older adults and benefit communities as a whole.

EMERGING CHALLENGE: CLIMATE, HEALTH, AND RESILIENCE

Climate change is also reshaping the public health landscape. Extreme heat, poor air quality, flooding, severe weather, displacement, and changing infectious disease patterns all affect health—often with the greatest burden falling on communities that already face inequities.

TFAH has long brought a public health lens to climate readiness. In 2020, TFAH and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health released *Climate Change & Health: Assessing State Preparedness*, a first-of-its-kind assessment of all 50 states and the District of Columbia that examined states' vulnerability to climate-related health threats and their preparedness to protect residents. TFAH has continued to build on this work by advancing policies to strengthen readiness for climate-related and environmental health threats, connecting this work to the broader goals of prevention, equity, emergency preparedness, and community well-being.

“ Integrating healthy aging into public health aligns closely with The John A. Hartford Foundation's philanthropic priorities. Our foundation has a long history of working to improve healthcare for older adults, but achieving meaningful impact requires cross-sector collaboration. After launching the Age-Friendly Health Systems Movement in 2016, we partnered with TFAH to launch the Age-Friendly Public Health Systems initiative, which applies an aging lens to the core functions of public health and can improve health across the lifespan. TFAH has been an ideal partner in advancing adoption of age-friendly public health strategies and demonstrating how sectors can work together effectively.”

—RANI E. SNYDER, MPA

President, The John A. Hartford Foundation



At the 2024 NACCHO360 Conference, TFAH's exhibit booth provided attendees with information and resources about the Age-Friendly Public Health Systems Initiative. Pictured from left to right: Megan Wolfe, J.D., TFAH Senior Policy Development Manager; Dr. Karon Phillips, TFAH Policy Development Manager; and Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, TFAH President and CEO.

WORKING ACROSS SECTORS TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC HEALTH

TFAH's work with federal agencies, employers, business leaders, healthcare organizations, philanthropy, academic institutions, community organizations, and public health partners reflects a core belief: the systems that shape health extend far beyond any one institution or sector. Improving health requires partners who understand their shared stake in prevention and are willing to work together across sectors.

One example is TFAH's participation in the National Commission on Climate and Workforce Health. This strategic advisory board, created by the Health Action Alliance—the country's largest employer network operating at the intersection of business and public health—brings together leaders across business, health, climate, and policy to help employers assess climate-related health risks, develop effective responses, and build more resilient workforces. TFAH's participation extends its climate-and-health work into the workplace and brings a public health perspective to cross-sector efforts to protect worker health.

“Through its evidence-based recommendations, indicator development, and reporting on trends, TFAH helped bring climate change into the mainstream of public health concerns. Its reporting was a key contribution to the broader effort to integrate climate change into public health preparedness and practice.”

—JOHN BALBUS, M.D., MPH

Principal, Climate Care Consulting, LLC; Senior Advisor, Federation of American Scientists; former HHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Climate Change and Health Equity

That same approach—finding strategic partners and building shared understanding around a clear issue—has shaped TFAH's work on prevention, chronic disease, substance misuse, health equity, climate, aging, public health communications, and emergency preparedness. It has also positioned TFAH as a trusted bridge between public health evidence and the people and institutions that can put that evidence into action.

As TFAH looks to the next 25 years, its bridge-building role will only become more important. The next generation of public health challenges and opportunities will require strong agencies and sound policy, but also durable trust, broad coalitions, and shared commitment across sectors.

TFAH strengthens those connections—bringing partners together, contributing its expertise to the work of others, and building shared commitment around evidence, prevention, equity, and action so communities are better prepared for the challenges ahead.

Voices of Impact

What Partners Say About TFAH

Across TFAH's 25-year history, partners, policymakers, public health leaders, funders, and former staff have pointed to recurring core strengths: independence, nonpartisanship, credibility, clarity, convening power, and a sustained commitment to prevention and equity.

TFAH's impact is reflected not only in reports and policy recommendations, but also in its partnerships and the trust it has built with people and organizations working to improve health across the country.

ADVOCACY GROUNDED IN EVIDENCE

"TFAH has been a strong advocate for public health and a source of unbiased research reports on the nation's progress in addressing public health challenges, along with evidence-based recommendations to promote health and prevent injury. I look forward to TFAH's reports and have been pleased to partner with the organization as we work toward the shared vision of optimal, equitable health and well-being for all."

—**GEORGES C. BENJAMIN, M.D.**

CEO, American Public Health Association

A VOICE PUBLIC HEALTH NEEDED

"Twenty-five years ago, we knew we needed a new and nimble public health advocacy organization to make visible for policymakers what had for so long been invisible: the need for a strong, well-funded public health system that could address longstanding public health challenges and be well positioned to respond to new ones as they emerge."

—**MAUREEN BYRNES, MPA**

Teaching Instructor, Milken Institute School of Public Health, The George Washington University; former Director, Health and Human Services Program, The Pew Charitable Trusts, where she helped support TFAH's formation; and former Staff Director, Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee, where she worked with Senator Lowell Weicker

BRIDGING PUBLIC HEALTH AND POLICY

"A lot of what we have to do as national leaders in public health is represent what is happening on the ground to people who are in a position to affect change—lawmakers and government officials. It takes a lot of work and relationship-building to communicate what we are hearing from people closer to the ground and to work with policymakers to deliver funding, craft policies that make sense, and build trusted partnerships. ASTHO depends on partnerships with TFAH, NACCHO, the Big Cities Health Coalition, and many others to advance public health solutions."

—**JOSEPH M. KANTER, M.D., MPH**

Chief Executive Officer, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

EQUITY AS PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE

“Since beginning my career, which roughly parallels TFAH’s history, I have come to see the organization as a force multiplier because it advocates for the interconnected systems, funding, workforce, and policies that allow health equity to take root. I remember being introduced to TFAH’s reports and using them in my legislative work on the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. What TFAH does exceptionally well is translate evidence about equitable policy choices into a broader narrative about national resilience to public health threats. TFAH amplifies the need for structural change for audiences that might not otherwise engage with public health data and evidence, and I think TFAH does that better than most.”

—DANIEL E. DAWES, J.D.

Founding Dean, School of Global Health, and Senior Vice President, Global Health, Meharry Medical College

TURNING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

“NACCHO represents more than 3,300 local health departments, from the smallest frontier communities to the largest urban centers, and our job is to bring their voices forward. TFAH has been such an important partner because its reports and advocacy amplify those voices with evidence, credibility, practical policy solutions, and a strong national platform. Together, we’re better able to make the case for what local health departments and governmental public health systems need.”

—LORI TREMMEL FREEMAN, MBA

Chief Executive Officer, National Association of County and City Health Officials

CONVENING POWER

“TFAH has been at the heart of convening partners and policymakers and encouraging broad thinking. It excels at bringing together organizations that do not always work in the same spaces—public health, healthcare, philanthropy, business, community organizations, behavioral health, aging, and other sectors—around shared goals. From gathering these diverse voices to discuss the future of public health and health equity to using different levers in the public policy system, TFAH helps ensure that the funding, evidence, and systems needed to advocate effectively for the public health system are in place.”

—CHRISSIE JULIANO, MPP

Executive Director, Big Cities Health Coalition

A TRUSTED PARTNER FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

“TFAH is as important now as it has ever been. In a world that is increasingly polarized, someone must keep building bridges—because at the end of the day, we all want people to be healthy. We may disagree about how to get there, but most people can support a healthier America. TFAH has always held that as its North Star: How do we make America the healthiest nation it can be? That is a mission we need to focus on now more than ever before.”

—BRIAN C. CASTRUCCI, DR.P.H.

President and Chief Executive Officer, de Beaumont Foundation

PREVENTION AS A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

“I have worked in academia, public health departments, and now philanthropy, and TFAH plays a critical role across all of those sectors because it does something distinctive. TFAH keeps a close eye on the policy environment in Washington while staying connected to vital public health issues at the state and local levels. Its focus on prevention and preparedness brings a different voice to the field—evaluating evidence, translating it into timely reports, and communicating it to policymakers and the public. The trust TFAH has built through its analysis and reporting complements the work the rest of us do. It is hard to imagine public health and health policy without TFAH and the role it plays in advancing the field.”

—ALONZO PLOUGH, PH.D., MPH

Chief Science Officer and Vice President, Research-Evaluation-Learning, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; former TFAH Board Member

BRIDGING PUBLIC HEALTH AND BUSINESS

“One of the reasons TFAH has been such a valuable partner to the Health Action Alliance is its ability to translate complex public health challenges into language that is accessible to business leaders. TFAH’s nonpartisan research and insights help us bring public health information to employers across the country and keep the focus on upstream prevention—what can be done to prevent people from getting sick in the first place.”

**—STEPHEN MASSEY, MIA,
& STEVEN LEVINE, MBA**

Co-Founders and Co-CEOs, Health Action Alliance

BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS SECTORS

“For 25 years, Trust for America’s Health has helped bring people and organizations together around evidence, policy, and a shared commitment to stronger public health. Some of the most important advances in health happen when we break down the silos between sectors and work together toward shared goals. TFAH has played a crucial role in fostering collaboration and advancing policies that strengthen the nation’s public health infrastructure. We are fortunate to have TFAH as a partner in this work, and we look forward to all that we can accomplish together in the years ahead.”

—DAVE A. CHOKSHI, M.D., MSC

Chair, Common Health Coalition

EVIDENCE FOR BIPARTISAN POLICYMAKING

“When I worked on key public health legislation in the Senate, TFAH consistently brought constructive, data-oriented policy recommendations to the table on topics ranging from health security to the opioid crisis. TFAH’s leadership and staff were thoughtful in how they approached challenges and worked with members and staff from both parties to support policy solutions that advance public health.”

—**MELISSA PFAFF, MPH**

Director, Leavitt Partners; former Senior Health Policy Advisor, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A CORE PARTNER FOR STRONGER PUBLIC HEALTH

“At the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, we know strong public health infrastructure is essential for thriving children, working families, and equitable communities. Trust for America’s Health is a core partner, deeply committed to promoting public health at every level and building a nation that prioritizes the health and well-being of all people.”

—**CAROLINE BRUNTON, J.D., MPH**

Program Officer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Looking Ahead

The next 25 years will require the same qualities that have defined TFAH’s first quarter-century: trusted evidence, nonpartisan policy analysis, strong partnerships, and a commitment to advancing better health in every community.

“We stand at a pivotal moment in TFAH’s history. Our responsibility is not simply to preserve what we have built, but to serve as a bridge to what comes next—to carry forward the best of our legacy while creating the opportunities, ideas, and partnerships that will shape the future of public health for generations to come.”



—**OCTAVIO N. MARTINEZ, JR., M.D., MPH, MBA, DLFAPA**

Incoming Chair of the TFAH Board of Directors

—**J. NADINE GRACIA, M.D., MSCE**

President and CEO, Trust for America’s Health

The Next 25 Years

Public health in the United States is at an inflection point. The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the critical need for stability and resilience across the public health system. As with many public health emergencies, the pandemic brought an influx of emergency funding, followed by a return to chronic underinvestment. More recent uncertainty, disruption, and instability at the federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial levels have placed additional strain on the system. At the same time, the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation has contributed to growing mistrust of public health institutions and guidance. Together, these forces threaten the health of communities today and could have consequences for generations to come.

Decades of underfunding, workforce shortages, and inadequate modernization of public health infrastructure have compounded these challenges. The consequences extend beyond health. Public health helps create the conditions that allow communities to thrive and is deeply connected to healthcare, economic prosperity, and national security. But the damage to the system is not irreparable. Moving forward will require a different approach—one focused not only on rebuilding what has been lost, but also on reimagining what public health can become.

The challenge is formidable, but so is the opportunity. A future in which communities thrive; the nation's health, economy, and security are strong; and health, well-being, and opportunity are available to all is achievable. That aspiration is central to TFAH's mission and will guide the organization as it enters its next 25 years.

Throughout its first quarter-century, TFAH has worked at the center of the U.S. public health ecosystem—addressing systemic and structural drivers of health, advocating for the core capabilities and infrastructure needed to protect communities, working to reduce health inequities, and advancing prevention and equity as foundations of public policy. That commitment will not change.

What will change is the scale of the question TFAH is asking. Building on its experience in research, policy, advocacy, strategic communications, convening, and coalition building, TFAH will help tackle a defining challenge for the next era of public health:

How might we reimagine and transform the U.S. governmental public health system to be durable, resilient, effective, and responsive to the needs of the population and that works in close connection with community? How will we build toward achieving this system over the next 25 years?

TFAH will bring to this work the same strengths that have defined its first 25 years: rigorous research, practical policy development, effective advocacy, trusted convening, strategic communications, and an independent, nonpartisan voice. But reimagining governmental public health cannot be accomplished by any one organization or sector. TFAH will work with partners across public health, healthcare, philanthropy, business, academia, government, communities, and other sectors to develop a shared vision and identify practical pathways for turning that vision into action.

That work will require TFAH to deepen its role both as a convener and as a partner—bringing people and organizations together, contributing its expertise to efforts led by others, and connecting governmental public health with the many sectors and systems that shape health. It will also require learning from communities and from others already working to rethink how the nation's institutions can better support health and well-being.

Together, we can build a governmental public health system that is durable, evidence-based, equitable, comprehensive, and prepared for emerging threats and opportunities—a system shaped by the needs, knowledge, and experiences of the people and communities it serves.

This is what the moment calls for.

Join Us in Building the **NEXT 25 YEARS**

PARTNERING FOR A HEALTHIER, MORE RESILIENT FUTURE

For 25 years, Trust for America's Health has turned public health evidence into policy action. Across moments of crisis and periods of long-term change, TFAH has provided independent analysis, practical recommendations, trusted convening, and nonpartisan advocacy that advances the nation's ability to prevent disease, strengthen public health systems, and improve lives.

The next 25 years will require that same combination of evidence, leadership, and sustained partnership.

The public health challenges ahead are complex and interconnected. Emerging infectious diseases, climate-related health threats, chronic disease, mental health and substance misuse, ensuring health across the lifespan, persistent inequities, and strained trust in public health institutions and guidance all point to the same need: a stronger, modernized, more resilient, and more equitable public health system.

TFAH is ready to build that future. But lasting progress will require organizations and leaders across sectors to bring their resources, expertise, experience, reach, and influence to a shared commitment to prevention, preparedness, equity, and evidence-based action.

Partnership with TFAH can take many forms: supporting independent research and advocacy; contributing expertise and practical experience; collaborating on policy development, communications, and convenings; extending the reach of evidence-based recommendations; and investing in the organizational capacity needed to sustain this work.

Together, we can ensure that public health systems are ready before crises occur; that prevention is valued and sustained; that decision-makers have credible evidence to guide action; and that every community has a fair opportunity to be healthy.

Join us in strengthening public health and building the next 25 years.

Financial Stewardship

TFAH is committed to responsible financial stewardship and transparency. The following summary presents highlights from the organization's most recent audited financial statements.

2025 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS (Amounts in U.S. dollars)		
FUNDING WAS OBTAINED FROM:	2024	2025
Grant revenue	3,572,403	1,748,333
Contract revenue	30,390	57,896
Other donations	13,949	30,380
Investment return	895,195	782,758
Total Funding	4,511,937	2,619,367
FUNDS WERE SPENT ON:	2024	2025
Program services	4,705,005	4,534,193
General and administrative costs	763,774	769,223
Fundraising	397,637	362,815
Total Expenses	5,866,416	5,666,231
ASSETS AND LIABILITIES (Amounts in U.S. dollars)		
ASSETS:	2024	2025
Cash and cash equivalents	1,996,163	2,132,789
Certificates of deposit	7,313,165	5,933,302
Unconditional promises to give	2,519,158	175,000
Accounts receivable	19,105	12,466
Investments	5,465,529	5,976,396
Operating lease right-of-use asset	646,227	395,225
Other assets	247,704	208,019
Total Assets	18,207,051	14,833,197
LIABILITIES:	2024	2025
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	280,810	275,075
Deferred contract revenue	2,500	2,500
Operating lease liability	838,231	516,976
Total Liabilities	1,121,541	794,551
NET ASSETS:	2024	2025
Available for general operations	13,140,774	12,632,482
Available for designated purposes	3,944,736	1,406,164
Total Net Assets	17,085,510	14,038,646
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	18,207,051	14,833,197

Note: The amounts shown are summarized from Trust for America's Health's audited financial statements. Please contact Trust for America's Health at 202-223-9870 or info@tfah.org with questions or for additional information.

2025 FUNDERS

To maintain its independent voice as an advocate for all, TFAH relies solely on philanthropic support to fulfill its mission. We sincerely thank our generous funders:

The Archer Group

Bloomberg American Health Initiative at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

The California Endowment

Dawn Hill Fund

Grantmakers In Health

The John A. Hartford Foundation

The Millstream Fund

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Rush University Medical Center

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

TFAH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stephanie K. Mayfield Gibson, M.D., FCAP

Chair of the TFAH Board of Directors

Former Director, U.S. COVID-19 Response Initiative

Resolve to Save Lives

David Fleming, M.D.

Vice Chair of the TFAH Board of Directors

Clinical Associate Professor

University of Washington School of Public Health

Doug Bauer, M.S., M.J.

Treasurer of the TFAH Board of Directors

Executive Director

The Clark, Scriven, and Fernleigh Foundations

Senior Vice President

The Clark Estates, Inc.

Theodore Spencer, M.J.

Secretary of the TFAH Board of Directors

Co-Founder

Trust for America's Health

Cynthia M. Harris, Ph.D., DABT

Associate Dean for Public Health

Director and Professor

Institute of Public Health, Florida A&M University

Robert T. Harris, M.D., FACP

Senior Medical Director

General Dynamics Information Technology

David Lakey, M.D.

Chief Medical Officer and Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs

The University of Texas System

Octavio N. Martinez, Jr., M.D., MPH, MBA, DLFAPA

Senior Associate Vice President and Executive Director

Hogg Foundation for Mental Health,

The University of Texas at Austin

Eduardo J. Sanchez, M.D., MPH

Chief Medical Officer for Prevention

American Heart Association

Umair A. Shah, M.D., MPH

Chief Medical Officer

Jaan Health

Former Secretary of Health

Washington State Department of Health

Vince Ventimiglia, J.D.

Senior Advisor and Former CEO

Leavitt Partners

STAFF

TFAH extends deep thanks to the current and former staff members whose work has shaped and sustained the organization over its first 25 years. Their dedication, expertise, creativity, and commitment to public health have made TFAH's impact possible and advanced its mission across every stage of its history.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TFAH extends special thanks to the leaders, partners, funders, policymakers, public health practitioners, and former staff who contributed reflections, stories, and perspectives for this 25th anniversary Impact Report.



VOICES OF IMPACT SERIES

To mark TFAH's 25th anniversary, the Voices of Impact series brings the organization's history and policy achievements to life through the stories of the people who shaped them. Through filmed interviews with TFAH leaders, staff, Board members, partners, and supporters, the project highlights the organization's most significant public health wins, preserves its institutional memory, and looks ahead to the future of public health. These stories broaden awareness of TFAH's impact and inspire new connections. **WATCH THEIR STORIES:** tfah.org/tfahs-25th-anniversary.

ABOUT TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH

Trust for America's Health is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public health policy, research, and advocacy organization that promotes optimal health for every person and community and makes the prevention of illness and injury a national priority.

For 25 years, TFAH has worked to advance evidence-based policies, strengthen public health systems, promote health equity, and ensure that the nation is prepared to prevent and respond to public health challenges.

STAY CONNECTED

Trust for America's Health

1730 M Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20036

202-223-9870

info@tfah.org

tfah.org

FOLLOW TFAH:

 [Trust for America's Health](https://www.linkedin.com/company/trust-for-americas-health)

 [@HealthyAmerica1](https://twitter.com/HealthyAmerica1)

 [@tfah.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/tfah.bsky.social)

 [@TrustforAmericasHealth](https://www.instagram.com/TrustforAmericasHealth)

 [@TrustforAmericasHealth](https://www.facebook.com/TrustforAmericasHealth)

 [@trustforamericashealth](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8wXpYUgWpYUgWpYUgWpYUg)

Subscribe to TFAH's newsletters, including the Wellness and Prevention Digest, to receive the latest news, reports, events, and public health updates.

tfah.org/about/tfah-newsletters

To learn more about TFAH's work, publications, and opportunities for partnership, visit tfah.org.