

2020 POLICY BRIEF



Protect Funding for Core Local Public Health Services and Prevention Programs

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress, especially those who serve on the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees, to protect funding for local public health services and prevention programs made possible by the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF).

BACKGROUND:

Counties support the majority of America's 2,800 local health departments and protect our residents' health, safety and quality of life. In fact, over two-thirds of local health departments are county-based and another eight percent serve multiple counties. Local health departments provide immunizations, conduct surveillance to detect and monitor emerging infectious diseases, protect the food and water supply, and prepare for and respond to disasters, acts of bioterrorism and other health emergencies. In addition, local health departments work with community partners to help prevent the leading causes of death and disability and reduce health care costs.

Federal investments are responsible for nearly 25 percent of local health departments' revenue. According to the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), over the past decade, local health departments have lost over 56,000 jobs, a 25 percent decrease, and budget cuts continue to affect one in five local health departments. Dedicated funding sources such as the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) are critical to helping counties support core local public health programs such as immunizations and chronic disease prevention. PPHF also invests in new and innovative programs tailored to the unique health problems facing our communities, including the underlying social determinants of health.

Local public health programs are essential for preventing chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes, which are responsible for 75 percent of all healthcare spending and are responsible for 70 percent of deaths in the U.S.

Since its inception in FY 2010, the PPHF has invested over \$7 billion to help our communities address urgent public health challenges and reduce long-term healthcare costs. PPHF, though

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Local public health programs help prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes, which are responsible for 75% of all healthcare spending and 7 of 10 deaths in the United States

last funded at \$804.5 million in FY 2019, has been the subject of multiple repeal attempts in Congress. It was most recently cut by \$1.35 billion over the next ten years through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which was signed into law on February 9, 2018. Further cutting PPHF funding, especially without increasing funding for local public health programs through regular appropriations, would negatively impact local public health departments already strained by having to respond to illness outbreaks and the ongoing opioid crisis while maintaining core operations to keep residents healthy and safe. In June 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a FY 2020 measure allotting \$8.3 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including \$854 million for the PPHF.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

The PPHF allows local and state health departments to tailor community solutions. States and localities face unique public health needs and challenges that call for innovative and community-driven solutions. In FY 2019, the PPHF funded all (\$160 million) of the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. This program provides state and local health departments the flexibility to solve problems unique to their residents, while still being held accountable for demonstrating the local, state and national impact of the investment. States develop health plans, report their activities to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and implement prevention and treatment solutions to populations in need.

The PPHF supports cost-effective and life-saving immunizations. Immunizations are one of the most cost-effective public health interventions, saving an estimated 42,000 lives and preventing 20 million cases of disease for babies born in a given year with a return on investment of \$10.20 for every \$1 invested, according to the CDC. In FY 2019, the PPHF contributed approximately half (\$320 million) of the funds to the CDC Section 317 Immunization program. This program provides funds to purchase vaccines for at-risk populations and immunization program operations, including support for implementing billing systems for immunization services at public health clinics to sustain high levels of vaccine coverage.

The PPHF funds early and rapid detection of disease and injury. Local public health infrastructure is crucial to controlling infectious diseases like tuberculosis, once the leading cause of death in the U.S., and responding to outbreaks like salmonella. In FY 2019, the PPHF contributed almost half (\$40 million) of CDC's Epidemiology and Lab Capacity (ELC) grant program. This is a single grant vehicle for program initiatives that strengthen state and local efforts to detect, track and respond to known infectious disease threats in communities and maintain counties' core capacity to be the eyes and ears on the ground to detect new threats as they emerge.

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