

February 5, 2024

Speaker Mike Johnson
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries:

As organizations improving and protecting the public's health, we write to oppose the proposed use of the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund) as an offset for H.R. 485, the Protecting Health Care for All Patients Act of 2023. The Manager's Amendment would cut \$1.19 billion from critical public health funding from Fiscal Years 2024-2029, a roughly 13 percent reduction over that time period. We urge you to reject any cuts to the Prevention Fund.

The nation can no longer afford to underfund public health. In addition to losing more than one million Americans to COVID-19, the pandemic will likely have cost the U.S. economy \$14 trillion.¹ The nation spends more than \$4.3 trillion annually on health, yet only about 4.4 percent of that total represents spending on public health and prevention.² Despite spending more than any other high-income nation on treating disease, the U.S. has substantially worse health outcomes, with life expectancy declining in recent years.³

The Prevention Fund currently comprises more than 10 percent of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) entire annual operating budget. Cuts to the Prevention Fund will translate into funding shortfalls in programs that states have long relied upon to keep their residents healthy and safe. In its first 14 years (FY2010-23), the Prevention Fund has invested more than \$12.3 billion in resources to states, localities, and tribal and community organizations in support of critical prevention and public health programs.⁴ These investments include the 317 immunization program that enables prevention of outbreaks, epidemiologists and public health laboratory grants in every state and U.S. territory to detect and investigate outbreaks and prevent further infections, the Preventive Health and Health Services (Prevent) Block Grant that enables states and localities to address their most pressing health concerns, supporting cancer screenings, and other vitally important programs. Across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

¹ T Walmsley et al. Macroeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, *Economic Modelling*, Vol. 120, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2022.106147>.

² The Impact of Chronic Underfunding on America's Public Health System. Trust for America's Health, 2023. [TFAH-2023-PublicHealthFundingFINALc.pdf](https://www.tfah.org/prevention-and-public-health-fund-at-work/)

³ M Gunja et al. U.S. Health Care from a Global Perspective, 2022: Accelerating Spending, Worsening Outcomes. Commonwealth Fund, 2022. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2023/jan/us-health-care-global-perspective-2022>

⁴ For more information about the Fund at Work in States, see: <https://www.tfah.org/prevention-and-public-health-fund-at-work/>

(HHS), the Prevention Fund supports programs such as suicide prevention, Alzheimer’s disease prevention, and chronic disease self-management.

Funding prevention not only saves lives, but it also saves money. The Prevention Fund’s Tips from Former Smokers Campaign alone saved an estimated \$7.3 billion in smoking-related healthcare costs from 2012 to 2018 and helped more than one million Americans quit smoking for good.⁵ Public health funding has not kept up with the range of threats that public health must address. For many of these conditions, we know what works, but public health does not have the resources to address these growing health threats.

The Prevention Fund has already been cut by nearly \$13 billion from FY2013-2029. These cuts do not just threaten CDC’s budget, but also the ability of Appropriators to maintain funding for the entire Labor-HHS Appropriations bill. We urge you to reject cuts to the Prevention Fund and ensure that CDC and public health programs across the country can carry out their mission of saving lives and improving health.

cc: Members of the House of Representatives

⁵ Tips Impact and Results. In *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.
<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/about/impact/campaign-impact-results.html>