

October 23, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the 69 undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge Congress to provide emergency supplemental funding for critical public health, healthcare, and behavioral health services to address the ongoing crises in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands and other states impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Emergency supplemental funds are needed and will be utilized to enhance and sustain current state, territorial, local, and community response and recovery efforts in collaboration with federal partners including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other relevant agencies at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Public health officials are working tirelessly to provide necessary disease prevention and health promotion services to protect the health of all those affected by recent natural disasters, especially our most vulnerable citizens including children, older adults, and individuals with underlying medical conditions or special needs. However, the needs of these communities are great and without federal support to address the ongoing public health issues we fear the consequences to the American public will be grave. Emergency funding is needed to effectively address the following concerns:

- **Infectious Disease:** Ensure access to safe water and food and clean, properly maintained shelters and temporary housing to prevent vector-borne diseases. Regarding vector-borne diseases, public health officials must re-establish disease surveillance and effective mosquito control to prevent the spread of diseases such as Zika, Dengue, and West Nile Virus. Both in the early stages and throughout recovery, health officials must restore essential public health activities such as laboratory testing services, immunizations against vaccine-preventable diseases, and health screening, surveillance, and counselling for communicable and chronic diseases.
- **Environmental Health:** Flooding, power outages, and the breakdown of infrastructure can lead to exposure to a range of dangerous substances such as mold, sewage, chemicals, and other hazardous materials. Environmental public health workers must assist in assessing risks and community needs, educating residents on steps they can take to protect themselves and remediate these hazards when possible, and determining whether healthcare or other facilities are safe for re-entry and providing training to employers on workplace safety.
- **Special Populations:** Pregnant women, children, and individuals with underlying medical conditions or special needs are at highest risk of suffering adverse medical consequences during times of disaster. Services targeting these populations such as disease surveillance systems;

counseling, testing, and treatment; and health education must be rapidly restored and maintained to ensure appropriate follow-up care and improved outcomes.

- **Access to Mental Health Services:** Funding should be available to state, territorial, local, and community efforts to support additional mental health professionals and enable research into long-term projects to fully meet the mental health needs of those coping with and recovering from disasters.

The public health community also urges Congress to continue its longstanding support of CDC's Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program and the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response's Hospital Preparedness Program. These funds are critical to ensuring core capacities are in place before a disaster strikes.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Carolyn Mullen (cmullen@astho.org), chief of government affairs and public relations at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Liver Foundation
American Lung Association
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Hematology
American Thoracic Society
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools, Inc.
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Big Cities Health Coalition
Children's Environmental Health Network
Coalition for Clinical & Translational Science
Coalition for Health Funding
Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS, Inc.
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
Every Child By Two
GBS|CIDP Foundation International

Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
Health Resources in Action
Healthcare Ready
HIV Medicine Association
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Impetus - Let's Get Started LLC
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders
Interstitial Cystitis Association
Louisiana Public Health Institute
March of Dimes
METAvivor Research and Support
NASTAD
National Alopecia Areata Foundation
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
National Coalition of STD Directors
National Environmental Health Association
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Network of Public Health Institutes
National WIC Association
NephCure Kidney International
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Public Health Institute
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation
Scleroderma Foundation
SIECUS
Signalis Solutions
Sleep Research Society
Society for Public Health Education
The Arc
The Marfan Foundation
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Trust for America's Health
U.S. Hereditary Angioedema Association
YMCA of the USA