



March 30, 2011

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Pitts  
Chairman  
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee  
on Health  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee  
on Health  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Upton and Pitts and Ranking Members Waxman and Pallone:

We are writing today to oppose H.R. 1217, a bill that would repeal the Prevention and Public Health Fund and rescind any unobligated amounts. Good health is essential to every person's quality of life. Tens of millions of Americans suffer from preventable diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Furthermore, today's children are in danger of becoming the first generation to live shorter, less healthy lives than their parents. In order to support the nation's public health system and reduce rising health care treatment costs, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) strongly support the Prevention and Public Health Fund and oppose any effort to eliminate the Fund.

As you know, the Fund is a dedicated investment in community prevention and state and local public health capacity and workforce and is a much-needed down payment on the health and economic well being of all Americans. Federal investment from the Prevention and Public Health Fund has already begun to address improvements in the nation's health status by supporting essential and proven prevention activities, such as immunization and tobacco cessation. It holds great promise to improve the capacities of state and local health departments to protect their communities from health threats through the use of technology and increase numbers of highly-skilled scientists and other public health professionals.

Unlike the mandatory funds for Medicare and Medicaid, the law creating the Fund explicitly reserves the right of Congress to allocate Fund dollars within the normal appropriations process. This provision was purposefully inserted into the law to preserve the ability of appropriators to exercise their judgment in making funding decisions while maintaining this important fiscal commitment to prevention. The Secretary of HHS exercised the statutory discretion to allocate the Fund in fiscal year 2011 as the negotiations to finalize the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill are ongoing.

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Once again, I urge you to oppose efforts to eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund. The nation's comparatively poor health has a high cost in both human and economic terms. The nation's health department officials strongly oppose any efforts to decrease the federal commitment to prevention and public health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul E. Jarris, MD, MBA".

Paul E. Jarris, MD, MBA  
ASTHO Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert M. Pestronk, MPH".

Robert M. Pestronk, MPH  
NACCHO Executive Director