



March 30, 2011

The Honorable Joseph R. Pitts
Chair, Subcommittee on Health
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the governmental public health laboratories that constitute the membership of the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), I urge you to reject the legislative proposal that will eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund created by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and rescind any unobligated balances.

The nation's state and local governmental health laboratories perform a function that is vital to the American people and to the continued successful operations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC relies on the network of state and local public health laboratories which enables the efficient receipt and testing of laboratory specimens. Simply put, without their work more people will get sick, will stay sick longer, and will not survive their illness – these are unacceptable consequences that will also dramatically increase health costs for your constituents. This work cannot be performed solely by the CDC. What is more, this work cannot be performed by the private sector without large increases in federal funding to appropriately compensate their work. It just makes more sense to support the public health laboratories who are successfully doing this valuable work.

Governmental health laboratories have not been spared from the budgetary pressures that have had a dramatic impact on all state and local governments. The laboratories have benefited significantly from the first infusion of funds from the Prevention and Public Health Fund. For example, in fiscal year 2010, the CDC's Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) program received additional funding of \$17 million from the Fund and it was put to use in governmental health laboratories to improve capacity in epidemiology, laboratories, and in health information systems.

8815 Georgia Avenue
Suite 700
Silver Spring, MD
20910-3403

240.485.2745 phone
202.485.2700 fax

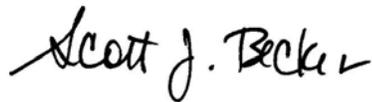
www.aphl.org

This infusion allowed for 27 fully or partially funded laboratorians charged with expanding and enhancing primary testing and reporting capacity; 29 fully or partially funded laboratory staff focusing on activities such as foodborne disease identification, vectorborne disease detection and characterization, and rapid testing for outbreak response; \$1.4 million for laboratory supplies supporting modernization of laboratory techniques and equipment, increased ability to establish surge capacity, and increased capacity for rapid testing; and \$1.4 million for laboratory equipment to expand, enhance and support testing capacity. Additionally, the ELC funding increase allows for 63 fully or partially funded staff who focus on electronic lab reporting for biosurveillance and strengthening epidemiology and laboratory electronic information exchange. The Prevention and Public Health fund put scientists to work in communities across the country.

Eliminating the Prevention and Public Health fund would stop this activity in its tracks and put Americans at risk, and would further cost jobs in a time when preserving and creating jobs is essential in a struggling economy. This modest investment in governmental health laboratories will lead to a reduction in the number of Americans who become ill by detecting disease outbreaks earlier and allowing interventions that improve their health by limiting the spread of those outbreaks. The information provided by these laboratories was crucial to the effective response to the H1N1 pandemic influenza and the recent outbreaks of foodborne disease.

Elimination of the Prevention and Public Health Fund would jeopardize the health of the American people. We ask that the Committee forgo partisan political posturing in the interest of protecting your constituents.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott J. Becker" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott J. Becker, MS
Executive Director

