



December 17, 2008

Hon. Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. David Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. James Walsh
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Specter, Chairman Obey, and Ranking Member Walsh:

The Friends of NCHS (list attached) wish to thank you for proposing a funding level of \$124.7 million for National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies fiscal year 2009 appropriations bills, and we respectfully urge you to sustain this level of funding in your conference bill. In addition, we hope you will sustain report language included in the House and Senate reports to protect the timeliness of data and the integrity of the vital statistics system. We greatly appreciate your leadership in restoring funding for this vital agency and the health data it collects.

As you know, years of underinvestment have forced NCHS to undermine, eliminate, or further postpone the collection of vital health information to the point where key data users now question whether NCHS itself is in good health. Specifically:

- The sample size for the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), which has monitored trends in illness, disability, and health insurance coverage for over 50 years, has been cut in half.
- The Nursing Home Survey, which was last conducted in 2004, has been postponed indefinitely.

- The National Hospital Discharge Survey, which has been conducted annually since 1965 to monitor characteristics of inpatients discharged from U.S. hospitals, will not be fielded in 2009.
- Starting April 2009, NCHS will purchase from states through the National Vital Statistics System only “core” demographic items of birth and death data. Nearly all data items that are routinely used to monitor maternal and infant health would be considered “enhanced” data items and would not be collected. We encourage you to stipulate that NCHS must continue to collect both core and enhanced data for calendar year 2009 from all states.

Without the \$124.7 million you have proposed for fiscal year 2009, NCHS will be forced to implement other cuts, including deeper cuts to the NHIS sample, cuts to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey sample and elimination of oversampling of vulnerable populations, or taking these surveys out of the field altogether

Your leadership demonstrates your commitment to ensuring that NCHS is able to continue uninterrupted collection of vital statistics, restore other important data collection and analysis initiatives, and modernize its systems to increase efficiency, interoperability, and security. Please know that the Friends of NCHS and our grassroots partners stand ready to support you in securing \$124.7 million for NCHS in fiscal year 2009.

Please contact Emily Holubowich at 202.484.1100 or eholubowich@dc-crd.com with any questions or comments.



AARP

Abt Associates, Inc.

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Alliance for Aging Research

Alpha-1 Association

Alpha-1 Foundation

Altarum Institute

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Academy of Physician Assistants

American Association for Clinical Chemistry

American Association for Dental Research

American Association for Health Education

American Association for Respiratory Care

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association

American Brain Coalition

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American College of Clinical Pharmacy

American College of Emergency Physicians

American College of Healthcare Executives

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American College of Obstetrics & Gynecology

American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Education Association
American Dietetic Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Health Information Management Association
American Heart Association
American Medical Informatics Association
American Nurses Association
American Optometric Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Public Health Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society for Nutrition
American Urological Association Foundation
American Thoracic Society
Aplastic Anemia & MDS International Foundation
The Arc of the United States
Arthritis Foundation
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association for Clinical Research Training
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools
Association of Population Centers

Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State & Territorial Health Officials
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Aveta, Inc.
Brown University, Warren Alpert Medical School, Center for Gerontology and Health Care Research
Building Bridges, Inc.
C3: Colorectal Cancer Coalition
Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Coalition for the Advancement of Health through Behavioral and Social Sciences Research
Coalition for Health Services Research
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Health and Vital Statistics Office
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.
Consortium of Social Science Associations
COPD Foundation
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Diabetes Action Research and Education Foundation
District of Columbia State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Records Division
Early Intervention Research Institute, Utah State University
Easter Seals
Emergency Medicine Network
Epilepsy Foundation of America
Fenway Community Health Center
Gay Men's Health Crisis, Inc.
General Mills
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center

Hadassah
Health Capital Consultants, LLC
Hearing Industries Association
Hearing Loss Association of America
Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research
Huntington's Disease Society of America
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research
The Institute for Healthcare Quality Research and Education
International Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia Foundation
International & American Associations for Dental Research
Jacksonville Emergency Consultants, Inc.
The Jewish Guild for the Blind
Johns Hopkins University
The Joint Commission
Kidney Cancer Association
Kraft
Last Acts Partnership
Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics
Lymphoma Foundation of America
March of Dimes Foundation
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Maryland Patient Advocacy Group
MATRIX Public Health Consultants, Inc.
Mental Health America
MJSahl Consulting
MMM Healthcare, Inc.
Musella Foundation for Brain Tumor Research & Information, Inc.
Medstat
The Melody Arons Center for Pre-School Research and Education

National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Committee for Quality Assurance
National Health Council
National Association of the Deaf
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Business Group on Health
National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National WIC Association
National Cued Speech Association
National Disability Sports Alliance
National Fragile X Foundation
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Hearing Research Foundation
National Osteoporosis Foundation
National Psoriasis Foundation
National Quality Forum
National Sleep Foundation
Nestle USA
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
NTM Info & Research, Inc.
Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy
Parkland Health and Hospital System
Pfeiffer University
Pituitary Network Association
Platelet Disorder Support Association
Post-Polio Health International

The Ohio State University College of Public Health
Oklahoma State Department of Health
Partnership for Caring
Physicians for Human Rights
Population Association Of America
Prevent Blindness America
Public Health Foundation
Quality Community Health Care, Inc.
Research! America
RTI International
Service Employees International Union
Simmons School for Health Studies, Center for Health Policy Research
Snack Food Association
Society for Investigative Dermatology
Society for Neuroscience
Society for Women's Health Research
Southeast Emergency Consultants, Inc.
State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association
Strategic Affairs Forecasting
Trust for America's Health
Tulane Center for Applied Environmental Public Health
UCB, Inc.
United Cerebral Palsy
University of California, San Francisco
The University of Georgia College of Pharmacy
University of Illinois at Chicago-School of Public Health
University of Michigan School of Public Health
University of Southern Maine, Institute for Health Policy, Muskie School of Public Service

University of Washington Department of Health Services

VHL Family Alliance

Virginia Commonwealth University, Department of Health Administration

Virginia Department of Health, Division of Health Statistics

Vision Council of America

WellPoint, Inc.

Well Spouse Association