

January XX, 2025

Dear XX:

On behalf of the XXX organizations dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the nation, we write to oppose any reduction or elimination of the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund) during the budget reconciliation process. The Prevention Fund provides critical funding to every state and territory as well as cities and tribes to promote the health of residents and prevent epidemics.

Now is the time to shore up our country's readiness for health threats in order to save lives, protect the economy, and support national security. Experts are concerned about the potential for H5N1 avian flu to become more easily transmissible, which could have devastating health and economic consequences. The Prevention Fund provides key investments in infectious disease prevention and detection. In FY2024, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Immunization Program, which funds state immunization infrastructure and outbreak response, was entirely funded by the Prevention Fund. The Prevention Fund also supports epidemiologists and public health laboratory capacity in every state and U.S. territory to detect and investigate outbreaks and prevent further infections.

In its first 15 years (FY2010-24), the Prevention Fund invested more than \$13.5 billion in resources to states, localities, tribes, and community organizations in support of critical prevention and public health programs.¹ Elimination of the Prevention Fund would translate into funding shortfalls in programs that states have long relied upon to keep their residents healthy and safe.

As Congress considers ways to reduce chronic disease and associated healthcare costs, cuts to the Prevention Fund would further set back those efforts. About 90 percent of the nation's more than \$4.5 trillion annual healthcare expenditures are attributable to chronic and mental health conditions, yet only about 4.7 percent of that total represents spending on public health and prevention.² Obesity alone costs the United States an estimated \$149 billion in medical expenses annually, with about half of those expenses publicly financed by Medicare and Medicaid.³

¹ For more information about the Fund at Work in States, see: <https://www.tfah.org/prevention-and-public-health-fund-at-work/>

² The Impact of Chronic Underfunding on America's Public Health System: Trends, Risks, and Recommendations. Trust for America's Health, 2024. <https://www.tfah.org/report-details/funding-2024/>

³ <https://www.tfah.org/report-details/state-of-obesity-2021/>

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.⁴ In order to curb these costs and support health throughout the lifespan, Congress has invested more than \$250 million from the Prevention Fund in FY2024 to prevent diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. The Tips from Former Smokers campaign, aimed at encouraging smoking cessation, helped 1 million smokers successfully quit between 2012 and 2018, prevented an estimated 129,000 early deaths, and saved roughly \$7.3 billion in smoking-related healthcare costs.⁵ In addition, the Diabetes Prevention Program has saved \$1,146 per participant in related healthcare costs.⁶ Both of these programs are either partially or fully supported by the Prevention Fund.

Across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Prevention Fund supports programs to promote the health of our nation's growing older adult population. Investments at the Administration for Community Living include Alzheimer's disease prevention, chronic disease self-management, and fall prevention. At the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Prevention Fund bolsters suicide prevention work on college campuses and in state and tribal communities.

Eliminating the Prevention Fund without a corresponding increase for the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Services appropriations bill would leave a significant funding gap for critical health programs across HHS. With healthcare costs continuing to rise, now is not the time to cut investments in prevention that have a proven track record. We urge you to reject the proposed cuts to the Prevention Fund and ensure that public health and prevention programs across the country can carry out their mission of saving lives and improving health.

Sincerely,

⁴ 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>

⁵ Shrestha, Sundar S et al. "Cost Effectiveness of the Tips From Former Smokers® Campaign-U.S., 2012-2018." *American journal of preventive medicine* vol. 60,3 (2021): 406-410. doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2020.10.009

⁶ The Impact of Chronic Underfunding on America's Public Health System: Trends, Risks, and Recommendations. Trust for America's Health, 2024. <https://www.tfah.org/report-details/funding-2024/>