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CAMPAIGN FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

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Versions of this letter were sent to the following individuals:

Representatives: Joe Barton, Roy Blunt, John Boehner, Michael Burgess, Dave Camp, Eric Cantor, John Carter, Ralph Hall, Jerry Lewis, Thaddeus McCotter, Buck McKeon, Cathy McMorris, Dave Obey, Mike Pence, Tom Price, Adam Putnam, Paul Ryan and Henry Waxman. **Senators:** Max Baucus, Kent Conrad, Mike Enzi, Judd Gregg, Tom Harkin, Ted Kennedy, Mitch McConnell, Harry Reid and Arlen Specter **Transition Team and Obama Administration Leaders:** Dr. Jeffrey Koplan, Dr. Dora Hughes and HHS Secretary nominee Tom Daschle

December 19, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
Office of the Speaker
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

During a meeting with you last year, representatives from the Campaign for Public Health discussed several concerns for the nation’s public health system. Our delegation addressed the serious public health issues facing the nation and stressed that community based health protection and disease prevention efforts are at risk, particularly those supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Also mentioned was the tremendous negative impact inflation is having on the budget of the CDC’s core health protection efforts.

The organizations, companies and coalitions listed below write to ask that you strengthen the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — leaving no option off the table when searching for ways to better fund and strengthen the agency’s public health efforts. Even before the economic downturn, obesity, diabetes and several other preventable conditions were increasing in prevalence. Action is needed to prevent our population from losing ground on many key public health issues.

The Campaign for Public Health’s most recent analysis shows that the CDC’s discretionary spending lines or “core programs” will have lost between \$500 million and \$800 million to inflation between 2005 and the first quarter of 2009. The smaller figure of half a billion dollars is equal to 7.84% of the agency’s FY08 discretionary budget.

As the CDC’s funding has fallen far behind inflation in recent years, the staggering economy is now producing troubling trends at the local government level as well. The current economic instability is resulting in falling local tax revenues for state and local governments across the nation. The impact on the public’s health is emerging.

- According to a news article from Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, city aldermen facing tight budgets are debating whether health department programs targeting obesity, nutrition and physical activity should continue to be funded.
- A November 23 article from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* stressed that budget shortfalls in Georgia are expected to worsen the state’s public health crisis. As a result, health professionals are predicting an increase in infectious diseases such as TB, HIV and hepatitis as well as an increase in infant mortality, ER visits and lower vaccination rates statewide. In the article, Dr. Alpha Fowler Bryan, public health director of Clayton County, Georgia is quoted as saying, “At a time of economic distress and greater needs, we’re less able to serve the public.”

- The National Association of County and City Health Officials has documented layoffs or permanent workforce reductions by attrition at more than half the nation's local health departments, with more expected in 2009. The nation is losing the jobs necessary to maintain a healthy population at the very time they are needed more than ever.

In a similar vein, American families hit hard by our economy are facing tough decisions about their own health – and some are choosing to pass on preventive measures in an effort to save on expenses.

- A front page story in the *Washington Post* on October 16 describes how Americans are cutting back on their personal health needs as a result of these tight economic times. Cutbacks like these will leave Americans unprotected and vulnerable to illness.
- A *Wall Street Journal* article from September stated that many Americans are forgoing clinical preventive services due to the worsening economy. The article cited that ObGyn visits, which are often the only source of preventive care for women, had already fallen by 6% from last year.

With local governments debating the necessity of health programs and American health consumers cutting back on preventive health, Congress must strengthen efforts to protect the health of all Americans. With an economic downturn threatening the health status of so many Americans, support for public health efforts at the local level will help prevent a deterioration of our nation's health.

In good times and in bad, giving public health efforts increased priority pays dividends. A recent report from Trust for America's Health found that investing \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within five years. While spending on public health and prevention efforts shows on government accounts as a *cost*, the *benefits* of these programs go far beyond improved health.

Several opportunities to ensure that the health of the public remains strong at this vulnerable time are at your immediate disposal.

- In the coming weeks, Congress may consider a stimulus package designed to boost economic activity while helping families weather these difficult times. Supporting critical public health initiatives focused on prevention will do both. As many in the corporate sector recognize already, stimulating the economy with an unhealthy population would be difficult to accomplish.
- Congress has yet to finalize the fiscal year 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill. While both the House and Senate passed significant increases to President Bush's proposed CDC funding level in their versions of this bill, a best case scenario conference report generated by these bills would leave public health programs outstripped by inflation. Strengthening the CDC and other public health efforts would better serve the American public — ensuring we are prepared to respond to unanticipated health risks and reduce the prevalence of preventable conditions.

- o Early in 2009, President-Elect Obama's Administration will send Congress a budget request. A great opportunity exists for Congress to work hand in hand with the new Administration to significantly increase preventive public health programs. A core program budget line for the CDC of \$10 billion by 2015 was endorsed by nearly 200 organizations in May 2008.
- o Improving our national health system is widely viewed as a priority in the next session of Congress and "health reform" is currently being discussed in Congress. We ask that you work closely with the new Administration to ensure prevention and public health programs are significantly enhanced and that a long-term view recognizing the importance of protecting Americans from illness and injury is part of any health reform measure. While attention is often given to preventive screenings and other payment-focused approaches to health protection, leaders in Washington should keep people from developing illness in the first place through a strengthened public health system.

Public health programs targeted at the needs of local communities must play a role in efforts to boost the economy, strengthen our health system and protect the public in these hard economic times. Moreover, support for these efforts will provide Americans with immediate health benefits and much needed federal services.

Families are tightening their belts and spending fewer resources on health protection and the prevention of disease. Local governments are being pressed to do the same. The federal government must strengthen our public health infrastructure so that troubling increases in preventable conditions do not result.

Sincerely,

Campaign for Public Health
AIDS Action
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Association of Occupational Health
Nurses, Inc.
American Cancer Society Cancer Action
Network
American College Health Association
American College of Cardiology
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and
Gynecologists
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Education Association
American Diabetes Association
American Institute for Medical and Biological
Engineering
American Kinesiotherapy Association
American Lung Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association

American Optometric Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Red Cross
American School Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Nephrology
American Veterinary Medical Association
Americans for Medical Progress
Arthritis Foundation
Association for Prevention Teaching and
Research
Association for Professionals in Infection
Control and Epidemiology, Inc.
Association of Community Health Nursing
Educators
Association of Maternal and Child Health
Programs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health
Officials

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Banks County, Georgia Board of Health
California Hepatitis C Task Force
CDC Foundation
Center for Biosecurity of UPMC
Center for Infectious Disease Research and
Policy, University of Minnesota
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Coalition for Health Services Research
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America
CSL Behring
CSL Biotherapies
Dawson County, Georgia Board of Health
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Directors of Health Promotion and Education
Every Child By Two
Fall Prevention Center of Excellence
Families USA
First Focus
Forsyth County, Georgia Board of Health
Franklin County, Georgia Board of Health
Georgia Public Health Association
Habersham County, Georgia Board of Health
Hall County, Georgia Board of Health
Hart County, Georgia Board of Health
Hepatitis B Foundation
Hepatitis Foundation International
Hepatitis Outbreaks' National Organization for
Reform
Home Safety Council
Immunization Action Coalition
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Lumpkin County, Georgia Board of Health
Lupus Research Institute
March of Dimes
Mental Health America
National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS
Directors
National Association for Continence
National Association for Public Health Statistics
and Information Systems
National Association for Regulatory
Administration
National Association for Sport and Physical
Education
National Association of Chronic Disease
Directors
National Association of County & City Health
Officials

National Association of Hepatitis Task Forces
National Association of Local Boards of Health
National Birth Defects Prevention Network
National Business Coalition on Health
National Environmental Health Association
National Fire Protection Association
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Marfan Foundation
National Osteoporosis Foundation
National REACH Coalition for the Elimination
of Health Disparities
National Safety Council
New York Academy of Medicine
Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy
Prevent Blindness America
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Rabun County, Georgia Board of Health
Reasearch!America
Scleroderma Foundation
Sickle Cell Disease Association of America
Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury
Research (SAVIR)
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of
America
Society for Public Health Education
Society for Women's Health Research
Society of State Directors of Health, Physical
Education and Recreation
SRA International
Stephens County, Georgia Board of Health
The ALS Association
The Louisiana Public Health Institute
The National Network of Public Health
Institutes
The Professional Nursing Alliance
The Public Health Leadership Society
The Quad Council of Public Health Nursing
Organizations
The University of Findlay, Environmental,
Safety and Occupational Health
Programs
White County Health Department, Cleveland,
Georgia
Towns County, Georgia Board of Health
Trust for America's Health
Union County, Georgia Board of Health
Wisconsin Association of Local Health
Departments and Board
Wisconsin Public Health Association
Wyeth Pharmaceuticals