

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

We write to express our strong support for the programs in the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) "Public Health and Preventive Medicine programs" line and urge that you continue to fund these important priorities in FY2018. The two programs-- Public Health Training Centers and Preventive Medicine Residency Programs-- are essential components of our current public health infrastructure. The Public Health Training Centers (PHTCs) play a critical role in the readiness of our nation's public health workforce. Likewise, the preventive medicine residencies are a vital training program for a medical specialty at the forefront of tackling the country's pressing healthcare needs.

We respectfully request that you fund the "Public Health and Preventive Medicine programs" line at \$21,864,000, including:

- **Public Health Training Centers: \$9,864,000**
- **Preventive Medicine Residency Training Programs: \$12,000,000**

The HRSA PHTC Program supports schools of public health, which in turn provide graduate and specialized training to public health workers in state, local, and tribal health agencies. Since 2008, surveys have shown that over 51,000 (19%) of state and local public health jobs have been lost to budget cuts. However, our nation's public health challenges have never been greater. State and local public health workers are doing more with less. Giving them the tools to be effective on the front lines of major public health challenges has never been more essential. The PHTCs have been an essential component in the response to recent crises such as opioid abuse, the outbreak of Zika and the threat of Ebola. PHTCs have trained 4,200 health professionals on behavioral health and substance abuse

prevention and response in the past two years. In the last year, PHTC training has included 7,200 contact hours dedicated to rural areas and 25,800 hours dedicated to medically underserved areas.

The HRSA Preventive Medicine Residency training programs provide a blueprint on how to train our future physician workforce. These physicians are trained to provide for individual patient care needs as well as practice at the community and population level to identify and treat the social determinants of health. Preventive medicine physicians are experts in disease prevention, health promotion, disaster preparedness, quality improvement and patient safety, and lead efforts to integrate primary care and public health. Many preventive medicine physicians have been called upon to ensure the safety of communities most at risk for the Zika virus outbreak. Since preventive medicine residents train in community-based settings rather than in the traditional teaching hospital, Medicare and Medicaid do not support the cost of their graduate medical education. HRSA is the source of this support, but has been able to fund only 25 of the 74 ACGME-accredited programs based on past appropriations.

Both programs represent essential components of a strong and vital public health system in the United States. Losing the PHTCs would jeopardize the readiness of our nation's frontline public health workers. Likewise, eliminating the preventive medicine residencies would exacerbate physician shortages in an important medical specialty that is leading the way in providing innovative solutions to the country's healthcare challenges.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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