

# COALITION *for* HEALTH FUNDING

Emily J. Holubowich, MPP, Executive Director

September 18, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

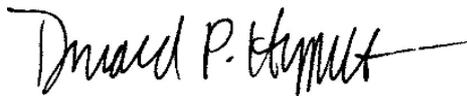
The Coalition for Health Funding—on behalf of its 95 member organizations representing the full breadth of constituent support for discretionary health programs—strongly urges Congress to make appropriations legislation a priority in the lame duck session, and work in earnest to **enact final, omnibus spending legislation** for fiscal year 2015 before the end of the calendar year. We are extremely disappointed in the breakdown of regular order in this year's appropriations process and the resulting short-term "CR" to provide temporary funding for public health, health research, and other core government functions. We are also concerned that funding for emergent needs has been offset by an across-the-board-cut. While relatively small, this cut compounds the impact of deep cuts already taken since 2010 due to federal austerity measures, including sequestration.

America's health landscape has changed dramatically in the last five years. Health insurance coverage expansion has redefined the roles of the health care and public health systems. New technologies have provided expanded opportunities for scientific discovery. America faces emerging public health threats such as Ebola overseas, West Nile, Chikungunya, and SERS on American soil, and a resurgence of previously contained diseases such as measles, mumps, and "whooping cough." Rural populations face continued challenges in finding qualified health professionals to provide essential care. Common infections have mutated and become unresponsive to antibiotics, prescription drug abuse and subsequent heroin use has reached epidemic proportions, and rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes and obesity continue to rise. Our returning warriors face significant physical and mental health challenges as they re-enter civilian life, and natural disasters continue to ravage communities to an extent never before seen.

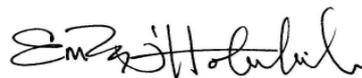
Yet during this time, discretionary funding for the Department of Health and Human Services and its principal agencies—NIH, CDC, SAMHSA, HRSA, FDA, AHRQ, and the Indian Health Service—has been cut by 11 percent on average due to the Budget Control Act and sequestration, which is set to return full bore in fiscal year 2016. In addition, Congress has notoriously failed to openly debate health spending through regular order. It has been almost a decade since the last health spending bill was enacted as standalone legislation. In fact, it has been more than 15 years since a health spending bill was enacted through regular order prior to the start of the fiscal year. It has been three years since the House has even introduced a health spending bill.

To continue funding health on autopilot—and on a downward trajectory—without deliberative discussion is an abdication of Congress's Constitutional "power of the purse," and its responsibility to the American people to safeguard their health and security. Lawmakers must work to enact omnibus spending legislation for fiscal year 2015. Only through thoughtful and transparent consideration of appropriations bills can lawmakers ensure we address our nation's health challenges. Americans deserve no less.

Sincerely,



Donald Hoppert, President



Emily J. Holubowich, Executive Director

<http://www.publichealthfunding.org>