

# COALITION *for* HEALTH FUNDING

Emily J. Holubowich, MPP, Executive Director

March 8, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

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 you to work in earnest to **enact final, omnibus spending legislation for fiscal 2018** that includes all spending bills, especially the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill (Labor-HHS). As the largest of the nondefense discretionary spending bills, and the bill that touches all Americans, the Labor-HHS bill should have an increase in its allocation proportional to its size and scope of impact, include all funding available through budgetary savings in mandatory programs, and be free of ideological policy riders that undermine efforts to protect and improve public health.

America's health landscape continues to change dramatically. New technologies have provided expanded opportunities for scientific discovery. America continues to face emerging and resurging infectious disease threats such as influenza, Zika, viral hemorrhagic fevers, small pox, measles, mumps, and "whooping cough." Shortage areas face continued challenges in finding qualified health professionals to provide essential care, and 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, heart disease, and obesity continue to rise. There is a looming crisis of caregiving as more people are living longer and aging into disability or aging with disabilities that must be addressed. Our returning warriors face significant physical and mental health challenges as they re-enter civilian life, and natural disasters continue to ravage communities. Our public health infrastructure—including our nation's laboratories and facilities—are in need of rebuilding to be operationally ready to protect, detect, and respond to threats at home and abroad.

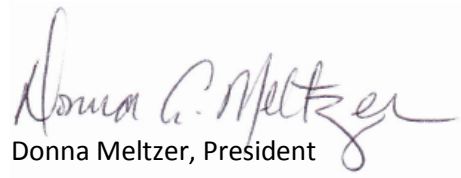
Completion of the annual appropriations process is vital to the American government's ability to address these challenges by providing additional or new federal funding for emerging needs and cutting spending that is no longer needed. Continuing resolutions do not afford these necessary course corrections, and cause significant uncertainty for federal grantees and contractors working on the taxpayers' behalf. No country runs effectively on autopilot. It is unnecessary, unproductive, and irresponsible to not complete work on the Labor-HHS bill. The final spending legislation must include significant new funding from the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 and all available budgetary savings to

<http://www.publichealthfunding.org>

address funding shortfalls across the Department of Health and Human Service’s agencies, programs, and activities that have weakened our nation’s public health readiness and left Americans vulnerable to infectious diseases and substance abuse, chronic disease, disability, unintentional injury and death, and mental illness—America’s leading causes of death.

Public health is an essential pillar of national security and one that the government alone is equipped to provide. Congress must act now to provide public health officials with the increased funding they need to combat imminent public health threats. To continue funding health on autopilot—and on a downward trajectory—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 clean omnibus spending legislation for fiscal 2018 that includes the Labor-HHS bill. Only through enactment of all spending bills can lawmakers ensure we address our nation’s health challenges. Americans deserve no less.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Donna C. Meltzer". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Donna Meltzer, President

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Emily J. Holubowich". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Emily J. Holubowich, Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Thad Cochran, The Honorable Patrick Leahy, The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, The Honorable Nita Lowey.