

COALITION *for* HEALTH FUNDING

Emily J. Holubowich, MPP, Executive Director

September 12, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

The Coalition for Health Funding, an alliance of more than 95 nonprofit organizations working to preserve public health investments in the interest of all Americans, commends the Senate Appropriations Committee for putting forth a Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) Appropriations Subcommittee spending bill that reflects a bipartisan effort to invest in America's health. However, given the austere allocation for this bill, we recognize that the Committee could not adequately provide funding increases for many agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services. Every health agency, program, and activity supported by the federal government has a unique and critical role in improving and protecting the health of Americans, and in this regard, the proposed spending legislation exemplifies the difficult tradeoffs necessitated by woefully inadequate levels of spending under tight budget caps.

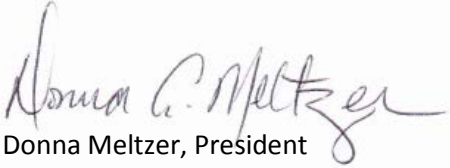
Specifically, the bill includes a needed \$2 billion increase to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Health research funding is a critical function of the federal government, and investments in NIH help discover cures for patients and strengthen the economy. However, without a strong health workforce to treat patients and prevent disease, evidence about how to optimally deliver cures to patients, and programs and services that enhance patient's access to these cures, the cures and treatments developed by NIH will fall short of their promise. Many of the programs that support these activities remain flat funded after years of austerity amidst growing demands.

The levels outlined in the Senate's Labor-HHS bill can only be realized if Congress amends the Budget Control Act's austere spending caps to stop sequestration. Without a bipartisan budget deal similar to the Bipartisan Budget Act enacted in 2013 and 2015, the funding proposed in the Labor-HHS bill and other spending bills will require reductions in any final spending measure, or if enacted 'as is,' an across the board cut to comply with the sequestered spending caps. In short, Congress will need to raise the caps to provide for the proposed increases in the bill and to provide additional funding to important programs that received cuts or were level funded.

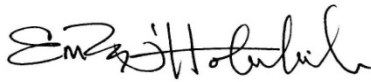
<http://www.publichealthfunding.org>

We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve America's health and hope you will consider us as a resource on health funding going forward.

Sincerely,



Donna Meltzer, President



Emily J. Holubowich, Executive Director