

COALITION *for* HEALTH FUNDING

Emily J. Holubowich, MPP, Executive Director

February 8, 2018

Dear Member of Congress,

The Coalition for Health Funding – an alliance of 95 nonprofit organizations working to promote strong investments in the public health continuum – **supports and urges you to support HR 1892, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (BBA).** This deal restores critical funding to nondefense programs, commits to increase funding for the opioid epidemic and medical research, and extends funding for community health centers, National Health Service Corps, and other health programs. We remain concerned about the use of the Prevention and Public Health Fund as an offset and we urge lawmakers to ensure that public health programs receive a proportional amount of new funding made available by this bill.

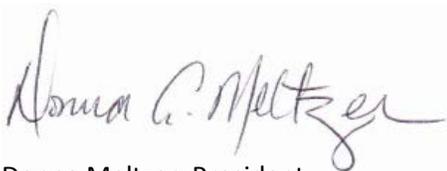
This BBA—the third such deal since the enactment of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA)—provides the most relief to date from the austere budget caps. It not only fully replaces sequestration’s harmful cuts, but it ensures that both nondefense and defense are funded at levels \$26 billion above BCA’s original spending caps for each of the next two years. This relief, if allocated fairly across the nondefense bills, will allow for investments in Americans’ health that would not be possible under current law. In fact, as part of this deal, lawmakers have agreed to invest \$2 billion in biomedical research and \$6 billion in addressing the opioid and mental health crises. We remain hopeful that additional relief will be provided for the entirety of the public health continuum in a final omnibus bill for fiscal 2018.

While we are supportive of the deal, it is not perfect. It includes \$1.35 billion in cuts to the Prevention and Public Health Fund starting in 2024, which would reduce funding available for state and local prevention efforts, vaccinations, and other initiatives led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Further, even with more than \$130 billion in relief from the budget caps over the next two years, nondefense discretionary funding will remain below funding levels in 2010.

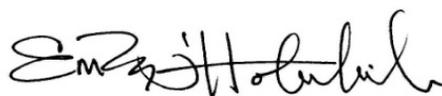
Nevertheless, failure of this deal would mean a continuation of all of the harmful sequestration cuts that threaten the health of all Americans by hampering critical investments in health research, leaving our most vulnerable seniors without a hot meal, limiting the number of families with access to preventive care, exposing Americans to public health threats, and hindering our response to those threats when they arise at home and around the globe.

Thus, the Coalition for Health Funding urges Congress to vote yes on the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018—raising the caps on nondefense discretionary programs and extending critical health programs. This deal paves the path to agreement on appropriations for the remainder of fiscal 2018 avoids a shutdown or full year continuing resolution. Moving forward, Congress must ensure that the relief provided in this deal is distributed proportionately across the nondefense bills and that regular appropriations for the entirety of the government are completed before the March 23 deadline.

Sincerely,



Donna Meltzer, President



Emily J. Holubowich, Executive Director

<http://www.publichealthfunding.org>