

COALITION *for* HEALTH FUNDING

September 20, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The Coalition for Health Funding—an alliance of 84 nonprofit organizations working to promote strong investments in the public health continuum—urges Congress to fully fund the Department of Health and Human Services for Fiscal Year 2023. While it is clear that Congress will not complete its work on year-long funding bills before the September 30 deadline and will need a continuing resolution (CR) to keep federal agencies funded, a year-long CR will harm public health, biomedical research, disability services programs, and other domestic programs.

While CRs are certainly preferable to government shutdowns, passing a year-long CR creates chaos and dysfunction across the public health continuum—not to mention missing an opportunity to increase resources across our essential public health agencies. The COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, the monkeypox outbreak demonstrates how ill-equipped our public health system is to address emerging threats, which in part is due to chronic underfunding and lack of sustained resources. Not only do CRs hinder our ability to protect Americans from infectious diseases, but they also compromise our ability to conduct research and administer programs that would deliver important treatment breakthroughs and help Americans live longer, healthier lives. Below are some specific examples of how CRs create disruptions to the administration of critical health programs:

- Last year, the nation's overdose rate increased by a staggering 22 percent with over 100,000 deaths nationwide. This increase follows a 30 percent increase in deaths from 2019 to 2020. CRs delay the distribution of much-needed funding to states to assist them in prevention, treatment, and recovery services in FY 2023.
- CRs force grant-funding agencies like the NIH to adopt conservative funding policies, holding back on investments in new areas of life-saving research and damaging existing ongoing research efforts. Unreliable and unpredictable funding streams hurt the nation's scientific enterprise, and damage America's competitiveness globally.

- CRs make it difficult for state and local health departments to plan activities and hire personnel to work in cities and states to protect the nation's health, as these health departments rely on predictable funding from federal agencies to carry out their work. Funding delays or pauses can ultimately hold up essential programmatic work in communities across the country and jeopardize a health response to a water, infectious disease or other crisis.

Predictable and sustainable funding is required to protect and promote the health of all Americans under the current circumstances it is critical. A year-long CR will inject fiscal uncertainty into an already uncertain environment for the agencies that support the nation's health and wellbeing, and the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet over. The Coalition for Health Funding calls on Congress to fully fund HHS programs for the entire Fiscal Year 2023 to provide robust support for health-related agencies in a timely manner to avoid the damaging trend of long-term CRs. Thank you for your consideration; please feel free to reach out to me at emorton@dc-crd.com.

Sincerely,

Erin Will Morton
Executive Director
Coalition for Health Funding