

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 15, 2017

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the below organizations dedicated to improving the public's health, I am writing to express our serious concerns with legislation being considered in Congress that would make significant changes to the tax code that could result in increased deficits and reduced resources to fund vital government services, including public health services. We are particularly concerned about reports that the Senate package is likely to include repeal of the Affordable Care Act requirement that individuals obtain and maintain adequate health insurance coverage. We have additional concerns about many unintended consequences that these legislative proposals would have on public health if enacted.

Health policy experts are virtually unanimous in their assessment that repealing or halting enforcement of the individual mandate would lead to millions more uninsured Americans. The most recent analysis prepared by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) concludes that an estimated 13 million more Americans would be uninsured by the end of the current ten-year budget window. We noted with great interest that earlier this week the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Medical Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, American Hospital Association, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association of America, and the Federation of American Hospitals wrote to you united in opposition to this proposal. Simply put: more uninsured Americans means more illness, more disease, more suffering, and higher health care costs.

We are on the record as a strong proponent of adequate, sustained federal funding for a 21st century public health system, including investments in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We have serious concerns that the projected increases to the deficit under these tax proposals, potentially as much as \$1.5 trillion over the next ten years, would have significant negative implications for the overall federal budget and severely restrict the nation's ability to properly fund CDC and other public health agencies at a level the evidence demonstrates is needed to protect Americans from emerging infectious diseases, unpredictable natural disasters, the mounting opioid epidemic, and the costly burden of preventable chronic disease.

Increasing the number of uninsured Americans and jeopardizing the public's health will not result in a stronger economy. In fact, the best analyses and studies available lead us to conclude

that the proposals being put forward will not result in growth in economic output and resulting tax revenues at the scale that would be necessary to overcome the amount that would be added to the federal deficit under these plans. Instead, it is likely that, as in years past, any potential future deficit reduction will come at great expense to non-defense discretionary spending. We are further alarmed that statutory pay-as-you-go (“SPAYGO”) requirements under the Budget Control Act would be triggered by these legislative proposals and result in across-the-board cuts to many important programs, most notably the elimination of the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund), which currently is investing \$900 million in core public health activities and the CDC and other health agencies.

Faced with the prospect of millions of more uninsured Americans, a shrinking amount of federal resources to invest in public health and other vital services, and the loss of the Prevention Fund, which currently comprises 12 percent of the entire CDC budget, we must strongly oppose these proposals. We urge Congress and the President to forge a bipartisan deal to raise the budget caps to allow for the necessary investment in CDC and other public health programs.

Sincerely,