



March 15, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman

The Honorable Arlen Specter, Ranking Member

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency. Housed within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it provides critical data on all aspects of our health care system. Yet current funding levels threaten the collection of vital information. To address this problem, the Friends of NCHS recommends a FY 2008 funding level of \$117 million for the agency, an increase of just \$8 million over FY 2007.

Many federal agencies claim that their programs yield savings. The NCHS actually does save money by collecting and analyzing data for other agencies, including the National Institutes of Health. Using NCHS's existing resources and expertise to create efficiencies saves the government millions of dollars in start up costs, government contracts, and duplicative data collection.

Nevertheless, current funding levels for NCHS are precarious. Since FY 2005, NCHS has lost \$13 million in purchasing power due to a combination of flat funding and inflation. As a result, key NCHS programs are in jeopardy. For example, NCHS lacks resources to collect a full year's worth of vital statistics from states. Without at least \$3 million in additional funding, we will become the first industrialized nation unable to continuously collect birth, death, and other vital information. Funding shortfalls are also preventing the collection of data on many other key health care issues (please see attachment for more details).

In order to address these challenges, the Friends of NCHS recommends an FY 2008 budget allocation of at least \$117 million for the agency, an \$8 million increase over the FY 2007 amount. This funding level would enable NCHS to ensure uninterrupted collection of vital statistics, restore other important data collection and analysis initiatives, and modernize its systems to increase efficiency, interoperability, and security.

The Friends of the NCHS is a group of organizations that want to ensure the agency's continued vital role in monitoring our nation's health. For more information, contact Emily Rowe at 202.292.6743 or emily.rowe@academyhealth.org.

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Alliance for Aging Research

Alpha-1 Association
Alpha-1 Foundation
Altarum Institute
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Association for Clinical Chemistry
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association for Dental Research
American Association for Health Education
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association
American Brain Coalition
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Healthcare Executives
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Education Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Health Information Management Association
American Heart Association
American Medical Informatics Association
American Nurses Association
American Optometric Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Public Health Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Society of Nephrology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Urological Association Foundation
Aplastic Anemia & MDS International Foundation
Arthritis Foundation
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.
Association for Clinical Research Training
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State & Territorial Health Officials
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Aveta, Inc.
Brown University Warren Alpert Medical School Center for Gerontology & Health Care Research
Building Bridges, Inc.
C3: Colorectal Cancer Coalition
Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine

Center for Science in the Public Interest
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Coalition for Health Services Research
Coalition for the Advancement of Health through Behavioral and Social Sciences Research
Commonwealth of the Northern Marian Islands Health and Vital Statistics Office
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.
Connecticut Department of Public Health
Consortium of Social Science Associations
COPD Foundation
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Diabetes Action Research and Education Foundation
Early Intervention Research Institute, Utah State University
Easter Seals
Emergency Medicine Network
Epilepsy Foundation of America
Hadassah
Health Capital Consultants, LLC
Hearing Industries Association
Hearing Loss Association of America
Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research
Huntington's Disease Society of America
Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research
International Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia Foundation
Jacksonville Emergency Consultants, Inc.
Johnson & Johnson
Kidney Cancer Association
Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics
Lymphoma Foundation of America
March of Dimes Foundation
Maryland Patient Advocacy Group
MATRIX Public Health Consultants, Inc.
Mental Health America
MJSahl Consulting
MMM Healthcare, Inc.
Musella Foundation for Brain Tumor Research & Information, Inc.
National Association of the Deaf
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Cued Speech Association
National Disability Sports Alliance
National Fragile X Foundation
National Health Council
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Hearing Research Foundation
National Osteoporosis Foundation

National Psoriasis Foundation
National Quality Forum
National Sleep Foundation
New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, Vital Statistics and Registration
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
NTM Info & Research, Inc.
Oklahoma State Department of Health
Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy
Parkland Health and Hospital System
Pennsylvania Department of Health
Pfeiffer University
Pituitary Network Association
Platelet Disorder Support Association
Population Association of America
Post-Polio Health International
Prevent Blindness America
Public Health Foundation
Quality Community Health Care, Inc.
Research!America
Simmons School for Health Studies, Center for Health Policy Research
Society for Investigative Dermatology
Society for Neuroscience
State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association
Strategic Affairs Forecasting
Tennessee Department of Health
The Arc of the United States
The Institute for Healthcare Quality Research and Education
The Jewish Guild for the Blind
The Joint Commission
The Melody Arons Center for Pre-School Research and Education
The Ohio State University College of Public Health
The University of Georgia College of Pharmacy
Trust for America's Health
Tulane Center for Applied Environmental Public Health
UCB, Inc.
United Cerebral Palsy
University of Illinois at Chicago-School of Public Health
University of Michigan School of Public Health
University of Southern Maine, Institute for Health Policy, Muskie School of Public Service
University of Washington Department of Health Services
Vermont Department of Health
VHL Family Alliance
Virginia Commonwealth University, Department of Health Administration
Vision Council of America
WellPoint, Inc.
Well Spouse Association