



September 4, 2008

The Honorable David R. Obey  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey:

The Friends of NCHS (list attached) wish to thank you for proposing a funding level of \$124.7 million for National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies fiscal 2009 appropriations mark. We greatly appreciate your leadership in restoring funding for this vital agency and the health data it collects.

As you prepare the fiscal 2009 continuing resolution, we respectfully ask that you consider providing NCHS with the \$124.7 million proposed in your mark. NCHS needs this funding now to preserve its current and future data collection efforts. Without the funding needed to revise, pretest, and plan data collection activities for calendar year 2009 and beyond, NCHS may be forced to make the following cuts:

- Reducing by half its National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) sample, which has monitored trends in illness, disability, and health insurance coverage for over 50 years. Such cuts will jeopardize data on health insurance coverage at a time when policymakers need these data to formulate and evaluate health system changes. These cuts will also have significant adverse effects on our ability to understand the health status of minority groups and health disparities at a time when our society becomes increasingly diverse.
- Postponing until at least fiscal 2011 its Nursing Home Survey, which was last conducted in 2004. Further delays in the collection of these essential data will prolong our understanding of the provision and financing of long-term care at a time when more and more aging and disabled Americans seek care in these sites of service.
- Taking its National Hospital Discharge Survey—which has been conducted annually since 1965—out of the field. Doing so will mean no data in calendar year 2009 on the characteristics of inpatients discharged from U.S. hospitals, e.g., average length of stay and rates of surgical and non-surgical procedures by age, race, and gender. In

addition, work will be suspended on the survey redesign to provide a wider range of data to reflect changes in health care delivery.

- Purchasing only “core items” of birth and death data from states (e.g., place of residence, age of mother, race of parents, and gender). Nearly all data items that are routinely used to monitor maternal and infant health, such as use of prenatal care, smoking during pregnancy, medical risk factors, and educational attainment of parents, would be considered “enhanced data items” and would not be collected from all states. As a result, complete national data on key risk factors would be unavailable and will only be collected if sufficient funding is available.

Flat and/or delayed funding in fiscal 2009 and uncertainty about future funding could result in even more drastic cuts in fiscal 2010 and beyond. These could include:

- Deeper cuts to the NHIS sample, or taking the survey out of the field altogether.
- Reducing by half its National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) sample, eliminating the practice of oversampling of minority populations, or taking NHANES out of the field.
- Postponing the Home Health and Hospice Survey, further limiting our understanding of long-term and end-of-life care.

The Friends are very concerned that postponing the proposed \$11 million funding increase until early 2009 will force NCHS to eliminate these data collection efforts in the interim and they will not be restored. By way of background, when NCHS has faced budget shortfalls and cut data collection in the past, the data are only restored years later. Under severe budget constraints, as we see now, the data are never restored (e.g., the elimination of data collection on marriage, divorce, and abortions).

Your leadership demonstrates your commitment to ensuring that NCHS is able to continue uninterrupted collection of vital statistics, restore other important data collection and analysis initiatives, and modernize its systems to increase efficiency, interoperability, and security. Please know that the Friends of NCHS and our grassroots partners stand ready to support you in securing \$124.7 million for NCHS in fiscal 2009.

Please contact Emily Holubowich at 202.292.6743 or [emily.holubowich@academyhealth.org](mailto:emily.holubowich@academyhealth.org) with any questions or comments.



AARP

Abt Associates, Inc.

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Alliance for Aging Research

Alliance on Nutrition Monitoring

Alpha-1 Association

Alpha-1 Foundation

Altarum Institute

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Academy of Physician Assistants

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American Association for Clinical Chemistry

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 Nurse-Midwives

American College of Preventive Medicine

American Dental Education Association

American Dietetic 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 Public Health Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
American Society of Nephrology  
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
American Society for Nutrition  
American Urological Association Foundation  
American Thoracic Society  
Aplastic Anemia & MDS International Foundation  
The Arc of the United States  
Arthritis Foundation  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Association for Clinical Research Training  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.  
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 and 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 the Advancement of Health through Behavioral and Social Sciences Research

Coalition for Health Services Research

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Health and Vital Statistics Office

Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.

Consortium of Social Science Associations

COPD Foundation

Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

Diabetes Action Research and Education Foundation

District of Columbia State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Records Division

Early Intervention Research Institute, Utah State University

Easter Seals

Emergency Medicine Network

Epilepsy Foundation of America

Fenway Community Health Center

Gay Men's Health Crisis, Inc.

General Mills

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Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center

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  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research  
The Institute for Healthcare Quality Research and Education  
International Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia Foundation  
International & American Associations for Dental Research  
Jacksonville Emergency Consultants, Inc.  
The Jewish Guild for the Blind  
Johns Hopkins University  
The Joint Commission  
Kidney Cancer Association  
Kraft  
Last Acts Partnership  
Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics  
Lymphoma Foundation of America  
March of Dimes Foundation  
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
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.  
Medstat  
The Melody Arons Center for Pre-School Research and Education  
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems  
National Committee for Quality Assurance  
National Health Council

National Association of the Deaf  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Business Group on Health  
National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy  
National Coalition for LGBT Health  
National WIC Association  
National Cued Speech Association  
National Disability Sports Alliance  
National Fragile X Foundation  
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  
Nestle USA  
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition  
NTM Info & Research, Inc.  
Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy  
Parkland Health and Hospital System  
Pfeiffer University  
Pituitary Network Association  
Platelet Disorder Support Association  
Post-Polio Health International  
The Ohio State University College of Public Health  
Partnership for Caring  
Physicians for Human Rights

Population Association Of America  
Prevent Blindness America  
Public Health Foundation  
Quality Community Health Care, Inc.  
Research!America  
RTI International  
Service Employees International Union  
Simmons School for Health Studies, Center for Health Policy Research  
Snack Food Association  
Society for Investigative Dermatology  
Society for Neuroscience  
Society for Women's Health Research  
Southeast Emergency Consultants, Inc.  
State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association  
Strategic Affairs Forecasting  
Trust for America's Health  
Tulane Center for Applied Environmental Public Health  
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University of Washington Department of Health Services  
VHL Family Alliance  
Virginia Commonwealth University, Department of Health Administration  
Virginia Department of Health, Division of Health Statistics

Vision Council of America

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