

America and Delaware Need Investments in Public Health Now More than Ever

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Every day, in our Delaware community and in every community across the country, the public health system works in the background to help Americans stay healthy. When we turn on the tap, clean water comes out. When flu season hits, public service announcements tell us where we can get vaccines and when we should stay home from work. Public health departments, organizations and agencies have resources at the ready to help us with everything from responses to extreme weather to tobacco cessation to immunizations. The entire response to the COVID-19 pandemic is within the dual realms of public health and healthcare.

In order to continue to protect the health and well-being of the people, public health needs strong investments, but progress on the federal level has stalled over the years. For nearly the last decade, [federal funding for public health programs and agencies has fallen](#). In fiscal year (FY) 2018, discretionary health spending represented less than 2% of all federal spending, and projections indicate that this will continue to shrink over the coming years. In addition, the president's FY 2021 budget proposal would make major cuts to key public health programs and agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Congress has mostly rejected these proposed cuts, and last year passed a FY 2020 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, the primary spending bill that supports public health programs, which includes critical increases for public health programs and agencies including CDC and HRSA.

Federal spending on public health makes a big difference on the state and local level. Funding for federal public health programs and agencies often goes toward solving community problems like preventing childhood lead poisoning, reducing infant mortality, curbing tobacco use, and lowering obesity rates. Budget cuts to federal public health programs can exacerbate reductions to public health programs at the state and local level.

The future of our nation's health depends on a strong and properly equipped public health infrastructure at the community level — in Wilmington, Newark, Dover, Georgetown and Felton — and everywhere in between. Adequately funding our public health system is essential to protecting Delawareans' health every day, and will save millions of lives:

- Delaware receives \$31.34 per person in funding from the CDC (8th in the nation), and \$35.97 per person from HRSA (13th in the nation). The Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) has awarded over \$36 million in grants to Delaware since 2010 for community and clinical prevention efforts, and improvements to public health infrastructure.
- In Delaware, 5.7 percent of people do not have health insurance coverage (compared to the national uninsured rate of 8.6 percent).
- The number and location of practicing health care providers is an important measure of an individual's ability to access health care. Delaware only has 44.3 dentists

per 100,000 people, ranking the state 47th in the nation. Sussex County has one psychiatrist available for the behavioral health of the entire county.

We are very fortunate to have a Congressional delegation in Delaware that is strongly supportive of public health. For the health of all Delawareans, we must continue to fight for public health funding - in Delaware and in the nation.

Amid this global crisis, your voice can still be heard. During National Public Health Week (April 6 – 12, 2020), you can:

- Call your local representative in Dover, and your State Representatives in Washington, D.C. and thank them for a job well done. Let them know what your community needs, and get involved in supporting solutions together.
- Join the All of Us Research Program run by the National Institute of Health (NIH). The program is inviting one million people across the United States to help build one of the most diverse health databases in history, and eliminate health and medical research disparities. It welcomes participants from all backgrounds, and researchers will use the data to learn how biology, lifestyle, and environment affect health. Their goal is to develop better treatments and ways to prevent different diseases, but they cannot continue to do so without continued funding.

We have come together in this time of social isolation by helping our neighbors, checking on our older Delawareans, and following the guidelines set forth nationally and locally to keep us healthy. Once this unprecedented occurrence of COVID-19 has passed, we can work together for so much more.

Learn about more ways to get involved at www.nphw.org and www.allofus.nih.gov. Together, we can make a difference.

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