



May 13, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Reid:

It has come to the attention of the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) that the Committee will consider using the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) as an offset for emergency supplemental funding for our nation's response to the Zika virus. This would decrease current and potential future funding for the Prevention Fund and our nation's ability to prevent chronic disease. **The Society for Public Health Education strongly opposes any effort to rescind funds from the Prevention and Public Health Fund for any reason.**

SOPHE is a 501 (c)(3) professional organization founded in 1950 to provide global leadership to the profession of health education and health promotion. SOPHE contributes to the health of all people and the elimination of health disparities through advances in health education theory and research; excellence in professional preparation and practice; and advocacy for public policies conducive to health. Collectively, SOPHE's 4,000 national and chapter members are employed in universities, medical/health care settings, businesses, voluntary health agencies, international organizations, and all branches of federal/state/local government.

Working on the front lines to keep children as well as seniors healthy, SOPHE members have seen firsthand the critical role of the Prevention Fund, which is the single largest investment in our nation's health. High quality preventive care helps Americans stay healthy, avoid or delay onset of disease, lead productive working lives and reduces health care costs. Quality, affordable medical care and community prevention must work hand-in-hand. Prevention has a proven return on investment: Every \$1 spent on prevention saves \$5.60 in health spending; every \$1 spent on childhood vaccines saves \$16.50 in future health care costs. Some 75% of all US health care costs relate to preventable chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, yet only 3 cents of every dollar is spent on prevention. **Prevention Fund activities have been overwhelmingly successful at addressing the costly problem of American's health illiteracy, preventing chronic conditions in elderly and vulnerable populations, and bending the cost curve in the American health care system.**

Rescinding money from current and future prevention and public health funding, as the amendment proposes, is fiscally irresponsible and may set back public health progress by a decade or more! 7 in 10 deaths in the United States are the result of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, and stroke and these leading causes of death account for 86 percent of health care spending in the United States. The Prevention Fund supports community-based tobacco use prevention, healthy eating and active living, childhood immunizations and clinical prevention programs that directly address these chronic conditions. Any approach to health funding that cuts programs designed to prevent disease and illness may actually lead to an increase in health care spending.

The current amendment for consideration is simply the latest in a troubling trend- proposals that perpetuate the idea of the Prevention and Public Health Fund as a slush fund used to offset costs in response to things as varied as public health emergencies, biomedical innovations or deficit reduction and sequestration relief. Continuing to put the Prevention Fund on the chopping block, rather than concentrating efforts on a long-term, sustainable effort to combat both emerging public health threats as well as the chronic disease crisis in America, is detrimental to the future of public health. **We urge you to oppose any legislation that would rescind funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund.** Please contact Dr. Cicily Hampton at (champton@sophe.org) or 202-408-9804 with any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elaine Auld".

Elaine Auld, MPH, MCHES
Chief Executive Officer