



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

*For science. For action. For health.*

May 21, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chairman  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write to thank you and your colleagues for introducing H.R. 2741, the Leading Infrastructure for Tomorrow's America Act. This important legislation would authorize critical funding to strengthen our nation's public health infrastructure and data systems to support agencies and programs at the national, state, local, tribal and territorial levels to protect and improve the public's health. Unfortunately, chronic underfunding of our public health system and reductions in the public health workforce at the state and local level continue to strain the ability of our public health system to meet the many challenges our communities face. Your legislation would authorize important funding, that if appropriated, would provide important investments to strengthen and modernize the nation's public health infrastructure.

The LIFT America Act would authorize \$3.75 billion over five years to improve core public health infrastructure at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the nation's state, local, tribal and territorial health departments. These resources could be used for strengthening workforce capacity and competency, laboratory systems, health information systems, communications, financing and other key functions. A strong public health infrastructure and workforce at all levels is critical to ensuring the nation's public health system can meet the current and emerging challenges and responsibilities facing our communities, including combating the opioid, tobacco and obesity epidemics, emergency preparedness, chronic and infectious disease prevention and achieving and sustaining high immunization rates against vaccine-preventable diseases.

The bill would also authorize \$500 million over five years for CDC and state, local, tribal and territorial health departments to bolster current and often antiquated capabilities related to information technology, data and data systems. Unfortunately, the nation's current public health data systems rely on obsolete surveillance methods and are in dire need of security upgrades. APHA is actively supporting a request of \$100 million for CDC in FY 2020 to modernize these systems and we are pleased the FY 2020 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill includes this much needed funding.

We also welcome the authorization of funding for programs to protect the public from environmental health threats. This includes funding for initiatives to help reduce pollution that contributes to climate change by upgrading the nation's electric grid infrastructure, retrofitting homes and schools to become more energy efficient and expanding funding for renewable energy in low-income and underserved communities. Importantly, the legislation would also authorize funding to ensure Americans have access to safe drinking water, including funding to address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in impacted drinking water systems.

While we welcome these new authorizations, we understand that they can only become a reality if Congress works in a bipartisan manner to raise the current caps for nondefense discretionary funding. Only then will appropriators and Congress have access to the necessary funding to bring these resources to the communities that would benefit so greatly from these programs.

Thank you again for your efforts to authorize important new funding to address these critical public health issues. We stand ready to work with you and your colleagues to raise the caps on nondefense discretionary funding and to ensure that Congress has adequate funding to protect and improve the health of the public including through the important programs that would be authorized under the LIFT America Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "G".

Georges C. Benjamin, MD  
Executive Director