October 23, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell Majority Leader U.S. Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan Speaker of the House U.S. House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515 The Honorable Chuck Schumer Minority Leader U.S. Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi House Minority Leader U.S. House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the 69 undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge Congress to provide emergency supplemental funding for critical public health, healthcare, and behavioral health services to address the ongoing crises in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands and other states impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Emergency supplemental funds are needed and will be utilized to enhance and sustain current state, territorial, local, and community response and recovery efforts in collaboration with federal partners including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other relevant agencies at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Public health officials are working tirelessly to provide necessary disease prevention and health promotion services to protect the health of all those affected by recent natural disasters, especially our most vulnerable citizens including children, older adults, and individuals with underlying medical conditions or special needs. However, the needs of these communities are great and without federal support to address the ongoing public health issues we fear the consequences to the American public will be grave. Emergency funding is needed to effectively address the following concerns:

- Infectious Disease: Ensure access to safe water and food and clean, properly maintained shelters and temporary housing to prevent vector-borne diseases. Regarding vector-borne diseases, public health officials must re-establish disease surveillance and effective mosquito control to prevent the spread of diseases such as Zika, Dengue, and West Nile Virus. Both in the early stages and throughout recovery, health officials must restore essential public health activities such as laboratory testing services, immunizations against vaccine-preventable diseases, and health screening, surveillance, and counselling for communicable and chronic diseases.
- Environmental Health: Flooding, power outages, and the breakdown of infrastructure can lead to exposure to a range of dangerous substances such as mold, sewage, chemicals, and other hazardous materials. Environmental public health workers must assist in assessing risks and community needs, educating residents on steps they can take to protect themselves and remediate these hazards when possible, and determining whether healthcare or other facilities are safe for re-entry and providing training to employers on workplace safety.
- Special Populations: Pregnant women, children, and individuals with underlying medical
  conditions or special needs are at highest risk of suffering adverse medical consequences during
  times of disaster. Services targeting these populations such as disease surveillance systems;

- counseling, testing, and treatment; and health education must be rapidly restored and maintained to ensure appropriate follow-up care and improved outcomes.
- Access to Mental Health Services: Funding should be available to state, territorial, local, and community efforts to support additional mental health professionals and enable research into long-term projects to fully meet the mental health needs of those coping with and recovering from disasters.

The public health community also urges Congress to continue its longstanding support of CDC's Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program and the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response's Hospital Preparedness Program. These funds are critical to ensuring core capacities are in place before a disaster strikes.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Carolyn Mullen (<a href="mailto:cmullen@astho.org">cmullen@astho.org</a>), chief of government affairs and public relations at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

## Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Liver Foundation

American Lung Association

American Lung Association

American Public Health Association

American Society for Microbiology

American Society of Hematology

American Thoracic Society

Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of Immunization Managers

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Association of Minority Health Professions Schools, Inc.

Association of Public Health Laboratories

Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health

Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Big Cities Health Coalition

Children's Environmental Health Network

Coalition for Clinical & Translational Science

Coalition for Health Funding

Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS, Inc.

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists

**Digestive Disease National Coalition** 

Dystonia Medical Research Foundation

**Every Child By Two** 

GBS | CIDP Foundation International

Green & Healthy Homes Initiative

Health Resources in Action

**Healthcare Ready** 

**HIV Medicine Association** 

Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

Impetus - Let's Get Started LLC

Infectious Diseases Society of America

International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders

**Interstitial Cystitis Association** 

Louisiana Public Health Institute

March of Dimes

**METAvivor Research and Support** 

**NASTAD** 

National Alopecia Areata Foundation

National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials

**National Coalition of STD Directors** 

National Environmental Health Association

National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association

National Network of Public Health Institutes

**National WIC Association** 

NephCure Kidney International

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Public Health Institute

Pulmonary Hypertension Association

**Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation** 

Scleroderma Foundation

**SIECUS** 

**Signalis Solutions** 

Sleep Research Society

Society for Public Health Education

The Arc

The Marfan Foundation

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

Trust for America's Health

U.S. Hereditary Angioedema Association

YMCA of the USA