

November 17, 2015

The Honorable Shaun Donovan  
Director  
Office of Management & Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Donovan:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations we write in support of funding for the Medical Reserve Corps, a national network of volunteers organized locally to protect the health and safety of their communities. The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) covers more than 90 percent of the U.S. population through a force that exceeds 206,000 volunteers in more than 950 geographically-based units nationwide, including several U.S. territories.

We urge you to provide \$11 million for the Medical Reserve Corps President's FY2017 budget proposal. This would restore the MRC to its FY2013 funding level. While a relatively small program, it maintains a critical connection between volunteer units and the federal emergency preparedness infrastructure.

The MRC, authorized through the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act of 2013 (PAHPRA, P.L. 113-5), was established after 9/11 as a way for medical, public health, and other volunteers to address local health and preparedness needs. These highly skilled volunteers include doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, and other community members. Two-thirds of MRC units are coordinated by local health departments. MRC volunteers provide an important community service, both filling gaps in routine health services and responding in emergency situations. Local health departments have lost 15 percent of their workforce since 2008 and rely on these volunteers to address community health needs.

MRC volunteers rush to the scenes of natural disasters like hurricanes and tornadoes, transportation disasters like airliner crashes and train derailments, major infectious disease threats like H1N1 or Ebola, terrorist attacks and other mass-casualty incidents.

For example, following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, more than 6,000 MRC volunteers from 150 units supported the emergency response and recovery efforts. When Superstorm Sandy hit New York and New Jersey in 2012, more than 2,000 MRC volunteers swung into action and donated more than 18,000 hours of their time. The volunteers provided medical care to people hurt in the deadly storm, helped operate emergency shelters and distributed food and clothing.

And when bombs planted by terrorists went off at the Boston Marathon in 2013 – killing three people and sending 260 people (including 16 who lost limbs) to local hospitals – the first medical emergency responders who rushed to help the injured were 151 MRC volunteers who were already on the scene to treat the typical injuries some runners suffer in the race.

No one knows when the next emergency will occur. But we know with certainty that at some point in the future hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, disease outbreaks, disastrous accidents, bombings and mass shootings are bound to take place. At these terrible times, the United States will need an emergency

medical response infrastructure in place, with skilled and dedicated professionals ready to get to work immediately.

As you develop the FY2017 budget proposal, we urge consideration of this program. Sustained funding for the MRC program is needed to ensure community partners are ready to act and protect their residents when natural or manmade emergencies happen. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please contact Laura Hanen, Chief, Government Affairs, at the National Association of County and City Health Officials at [lhane@naccho.org](mailto:lhane@naccho.org) for additional information.

Sincerely,

National/International Organizations

American Public Health Association

International Association of Emergency Managers

International Medical Corps

National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)

National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians

National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO)

Public Health Foundation

Trust for America's Health

State/Local Organizations

County Health Officials of New York (NYSACHO)

Local Public Health Association of Minnesota

Massachusetts Health Officers Association

NC Association of Local Health Directors

Providence Institute for a Healthier Community

Texas Association of City & County Health Officials