



March 20, 2015

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency. Housed within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it provides critical data on all aspects of our health care system through data cooperatives and surveys that serve as a gold standard for data collection around the world.

The 27 undersigned members of the Friends of NCHS recommend a program level of \$172 million in FY 2016—\$160 million in budget authority and \$12 million in mandatory Prevention and Public Health Fund—consistent with the president's FY 2016 budget request.

NCHS collects data on chronic disease prevalence, health disparities, emergency room use, teen pregnancy, infant mortality, causes of death, and rates of insurance to name a few. These data are used by the Census Bureau in informing its population estimates and projections; by USDA in developing nutrition policies that undergird multibillion dollar federal food assistance programs; by state and local governments and public health officials; by federal policymakers; and by demographers, epidemiologists, health services researchers, and other scientists. The health data collected by NCHS are an essential part of the nation's statistical and public health infrastructure.

We greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's longstanding leadership in securing steady and sustained funding increases for NCHS, including your recent efforts to stabilize the agency's budget by providing budget authority in FY 2015. Your support has helped NCHS rebuild after years of underinvestment and stabilize the collection of essential health data. For example, NCHS has funded states and territories to modernize the National Vital Statistics System—moving from paper based to electronic filing of birth and death statistics. Because of these and other data processing enhancements, NCHS has been able to speed the release of birth and death statistics in response to the user community's needs.

Our request of \$160 million in budget authority would allow the agency to maintain these critical activities and, with a \$5 million proposed increase in appropriated funds, support states in their

continued implementation of electronic death registration systems (EDRS) to enhance the timeliness and quality of death data used both in public health and in fraud prevention.

Our proposed increase of \$12 million in Prevention Fund funding would allow NCHS to continue expansions to questions and sample sizes in the National Health Interview Survey and expansions in sample sizes in the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS). These expansions have yielded better to assess Americans' access to, and use of, health care services. NCHS previously received Prevention Fund dollars to support the expansion of these surveys, but received no such funding in FY 2014 and FY 2015. Without the Prevention Fund allocation in FY 2016, these NHIS and NAMCS survey enhancements will discontinue.

We thank you for your ongoing support of health data and look forward to helping you further strengthen the agency. For more information, please contact Lindsey Horan at 202.292.6718 or lindsey.horan@academyhealth.org.

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association for Dental Research
American Association for Respiratory Care
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association
American Pediatric Association
American Pediatric Society
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Nutrition
American Statistical Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Population Centers
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
National Association of Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS)
Pediatric Policy Council
Population Association of America
RTI International
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research