

Statement of the Friends of NCHS on the Removal of Data from Federal Websites:

“The Friends of NCHS coalition is deeply concerned about the systematic removal of important taxpayer-funded public health information and data sets from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website on Friday, January 31st and stresses the importance of ensuring that timely and accurate public health data is made widely available. The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), housed within CDC, represents the gold standard of public health data in the U.S., carrying out its mission to collect, analyze, and disseminate timely, relevant, and accurate health data and statistics. Scientists, researchers, and public health officials depend on the data supplied by NCHS to track and understand public health trends and create policies to keep our communities safe. Restricting access to this data creates a dangerous blind spot for the institutions tasked with protecting and improving our nation’s health.

For example, the loss of data tracking HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases will impede our public health officials from understanding what is happening in their communities and working to mitigate the spread of disease. Further, the removal of references to gender, sexual orientation, and some instances of pregnancy status will hinder our understanding of the spread of certain diseases and how to best direct vaccines, treatments, and other public health efforts. These limitations will immediately harm patients, health systems, providers, and communities. Every day this data remains censored worsens health outcomes. The lack of communication further erodes trust. Further, communication limitations that bar NCHS from interacting with data users and technical experts reduces the utility of the data and limits future improvements that address key public health issues.

The consequences of this removal of scientific data and prohibition on external communications by NCHS will be widespread, costly, and dangerous. We call on the Administration to immediately reverse course and restore public access to critical and complete public health data.”

The Friends of NCHS is a voluntary coalition of more than 170 organizations and individuals that support the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Members of this diverse group -- including think tanks, professional associations, and universities -- rely on the data collected and maintained by NCHS to conduct research, support advocacy efforts, and inform health policy.