March XX, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair                      Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair                      Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

Thank you for your ongoing support for our nation’s public health workforce and data systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we continue to respond to COVID-19 and prepare for the next public health threat, the undersigned organizations urge you to appropriate at least $250 million for the Data Modernization Initiative (DMI) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Funding for DMI will also make possible the critical work of the CDC’s newly established Center for Forecasting and Outbreak Analytics (CFA). A $50 million appropriation for CFA in FY 2023 will help to fund the center to facilitate the use of data, modeling, and analytics to improve pandemic preparedness and response.

The DMI—which began before the COVID-19 pandemic—is a commitment to build the world-class data infrastructure and workforce that are ready for the next public health emergency. We are grateful to Congress for providing nearly $1 billion to date for CDC’s DMI through annual and supplemental appropriations. Now, we need robust, sustained, annual funding to ensure we can build and maintain modern public health systems and infrastructure, including at state, territorial, local, and Tribal health departments. While these annual appropriations are essential, the need for investment in modern public health data systems that keep pace with evolving technology is far greater and will require a sustained federal investment, including more than $7.84 billion over the next five years.

The DMI is creating a standards-based interoperable public health infrastructure, ensuring all systems can communicate and share data seamlessly with one another; advancing standards so that information can be stored and shared across systems; and facilitating complete and timely reporting so that our public health system has essential data on race, ethnicity, treatments, and co-morbidities that are critical for achieving equity in public health response.

We urge you to continue to prioritize public health data modernization at CDC by allocating at least $250 million in FY 2023 for the DMI and at least $50 million for the CFA. Rapidly evolving technology demands that public health keep pace with advancements by continually upgrading data systems and ensuring cybersecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown starkly that public health has fallen behind over the past decade because of eroding infrastructure in data science and information technology. We cannot allow our foundational investments to become obsolete—we must build upon them and provide adequate sustained resources for public health to develop, implement, and maintain the data systems.
and technologies needed to train the next generation of data scientists. A robust, sustained commitment to transform today’s public health surveillance will ultimately improve America’s health and security.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. If you have questions, please contact Meghan Riley at mriley@dc-crd.com.

Sincerely,

Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Big Cities Health Coalition
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Healthcare and Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS)
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS)