

Data: Elemental to Health



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Washington, D.C. – The founding leaders of the *Data: Elemental to Health Campaign* – Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), Healthcare Information & Management Systems Society (HIMSS), and National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS) – issued the following statement in response to the introduction of the bipartisan *Saving Lives Through Better Data Act* co-sponsored by Senators Kaine, Isakson, and King:

We applaud Senator Kaine, Senator Isakson, and Senator King for recognizing the need to invest in modernizing the public health data infrastructure and authorizing \$100 million for the fiscal years of 2020 through 2024. If enacted, this bold initiative would allow the public health community to detect public health threats more quickly, completely, and ultimately, save lives.

The bipartisan bill would allow governmental public health agencies at the federal, state, and local level to invest in a system-wide, enterprise approach to strengthen the core public health data systems and move away from sluggish, manual, paper-based data collection—still in widespread use. This bill would also support efforts to modernize our public health workforce because advancements in technology and modern data systems can only be realized if public health professionals are equipped to harness them.

“As an epidemiologist in Florida, and now in my role representing epidemiologists nationwide, I have personally felt frustration and anguish and seen my colleagues suffer too, when we want to provide answers to community members but can’t, because the data move more slowly than the disease” said Janet Hamilton, Director of Science and Policy at CSTE. “The nation’s antiquated public health data systems have important consequences: delayed detection and response, lost time, lost opportunities, and lost lives.”

The Saving Lives Through Better Data Act would allow public health to take advantage of technological advances to modernize the public health data infrastructure by enhancing interoperability, improving data collection and analysis, simplifying provider reporting, promoting electronic case reporting, and supporting earlier disease detection and response. Too often, the public health response to disease threats is hindered due to lack of interoperability and rapid data exchange with health care. This commitment to transform today’s public health surveillance system will make a lasting, positive impact on Americans’ health.

The [Association of Public Health Laboratories](http://www.aphl.org) (APHL), [Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists](http://www.cste.org) (CSTE), [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society](http://www.himss.org) (HIMSS), and [National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems](http://www.naphsis.org) (NAPHSIS) have joined together to spearhead the *Data: Elemental to Health* campaign—the first of its kind to secure meaningful, sustained funding to modernize the public health surveillance enterprise at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and through it, the state, local, tribal, and territorial health departments. For more information visit http://www.cste.org/data_elemental.