

Data: Elemental to Health

CSTE APHL HIMSS NAPHSIS



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Contact: Emily J. Holubowich, MPP
Voice: 202.484.1100
E-mail: eholubowich@dc-crd.com

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) – applaud Chairman Lamar Alexander, Ranking Member Patty Murray, and members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) for reporting out the *Lower Health Care Costs Act* (S. 1895) today.

This bipartisan bill would authorize governmental public health agencies at the federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial levels to invest in updated, automatic, system-wide data infrastructure that moves away from the sluggish, manual, paper-based data collection still in widespread use today. 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.

“In an outbreak or public health emergency, speed is critical. Reporting lab results electronically should be quick and simple; I can electronically send or access cash virtually anywhere in the world but cannot similarly order or report lab results,” said **Scott Becker, Executive Director of APHL**. “This bill would authorize support to CDC and to state and local health agencies to implement electronic test order and result reporting. It will drastically reduce the time from outbreak detection to reporting to public health and clinical decision-makers, which means fewer people will become ill thanks to faster interventions.”

“Whether it’s Ebola, dengue, lead, wildfires, or tornados, public health threats are persistent and consistently evolving here at home and overseas. Effective prevention and efficient, rapid, responses rely on an interactive network of governmental public health agencies working with health care providers and the public,” said **Dr. Jeff Engel, Executive Director of CSTE**. “Unfortunately, the nation’s public health data systems are antiquated, rely on obsolete information sharing methods, and are in dire need of security upgrades. This bill would allow the public health community to detect public health threats more quickly, completely, and ultimately, save lives.”

“The nation’s public health infrastructure is fragmented, lacks interoperability, and is reliant on obsolete data sharing. The result of this is that health care providers who already have data stored and collected in electronic health records are often unable to rapidly share this data with public health agencies,” said **Dr. Denise W. Hines, Chief Americas Officer, HIMSS**. “This environment leads to increased burden on providers when reporting results in unnecessary delays or failures causing inefficiency and frustration on the part of both care providers and public health professionals.”

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“Vital records are called ‘vital’ for a reason, providing essential information on births and deaths that form the bedrock of public health,” said **Shawna Webster, Executive Director of NAPHSIS**. “States, territories and localities have made significant progress in modernizing systems to yield more, better, faster data—but a more holistic approach and dedicated investment is needed to bring all vital records into the 21st Century with electronic, interoperable systems.”

The Lower Health Care Costs 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 threats is obstructed because the diseases move faster than the data. The commitment to transform today’s public health data system will make a lasting, positive impact on Americans’ health.

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The [Association of Public Health Laboratories](#) (APHL), [Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists](#) (CSTE), [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society](#) (HIMSS), and [National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems](#) (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.