



ACTION ALERT: Increase funding for the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)

May 11, 2007

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

We urge you to write to your Senators and Representative asking them to support an \$8 million increase in funding for the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

NCHS is the nation's principal health statistics agency. Whether you do academic research or write grants for community health projects, chances are you rely on data from NCHS. The agency, which is a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), compiles statistical information to measure the health of the nation and guide public health and health policy decisions. Without an increase of at least \$8 million, NCHS's already limited ability to collect data on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders will suffer further.

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) supports an appropriation level of at least \$8 million higher than the budget request. This funding is needed to:

- Improve data on race and ethnicity to allow us to better understand health disparities and help identify interventions to reduce them;
- Improve the extent to which we have detailed health data at the State level to ensure that Federal investments in health are effective, help State-level program decision-making, and enable researchers to learn what health policies work in different States;
- Expand data collection on the health care system to include dental care, community health centers, assisted living, nursing home, and hospice care.

How to reach your member: To find out who your Senators and Representatives are, go to www.senate.gov and www.house.gov and enter your zip code. You can send them an email or call them.

A list of members who sit on the subcommittees that have jurisdiction over this funding is at the bottom of this email. Your email or call is especially valuable if your representatives sit on these committees.

Some things to say: Attached and below is a sample letter that you can personalize. You can also visit the "Friends of NCHS" website for more talking points:
<http://www.chsr.org/friendsofnchs.htm>

Thank you

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Sample letter:

Dear Senator/Representative:

I am writing as a constituent asking you to support an \$8 million increase in funding for the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and related agencies. The total appropriation should be at least \$117 million for FY 2008.

NCHS, which is a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is the nation's principal health statistics agency. We rely on NCHS to provide data on all aspects of our health and health care, including births, deaths, health care costs, safety, and health insurance coverage.

- The National Vital Statistics System (NVSS): Compiles data from states and territories on births and deaths including infant mortality. If not funded, we will be the first industrialized nation unable to continue to collect annual numbers on birth and death rates.
- The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES): Monitors nutrition, physical activity, obesity rates, and a variety of other health risk factors in order to assess the health of Americans. Without additional funding, NHANES will not be able to oversample vulnerable populations, resulting in losing data on racial and ethnic health disparities.
- The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS): The nation's largest household health survey, providing information on insurance coverage, access to health care, health care utilization, immunizations, diabetes, mental health and many other conditions. There is a planned oversample of Asian Americans to give a more accurate picture of our health care needs. With funding cuts, the NHIS' oversampling capability will be cut and they will be unable to provide an accurate picture of the health of many minority populations.
- The National Health Care Study: Allows NCHS to survey healthcare providers yielding information on health care costs, quality, and safety at points of health care service.

NCHS health statistics set the bar for helping policymakers, providers, health plans, public health officials/researchers, businesses, and epidemiologists, conduct research and develop effective public health service programs and messages geared towards specific audiences.

NCHS has been flat-funded for the last three years, which is effectively a cut in funding. In FY 2007, NCHS was funded at \$109 million. The President's budget only asks for an additional \$900,000 for FY 2008. Without at least \$8 million in additional funding, NCHS will be forced to sacrifice the scope and timeliness of many of its surveys and programs. NCHS now lacks the resources necessary to collect a full year's worth of birth, death, and other vital health statistics from states, making America the first industrialized nation unable to do so!

To sustain the capacity of this field to answer the pressing policy issues of today and inform provider and patient decisions about care, I ask you to support funding NCHS at \$117 million, which is \$8 million more than FY 2007. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your name

Address

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Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Democratic Subcommittee Members:

- Senator Tom Harkin (Chairman) (IA)
- Senator Daniel Inouye (HI)
- Senator Herb Kohl (WI)
- Senator Patty Murray (WA)
- Senator Mary Landrieu (LA)
- Senator Richard Durbin (IL)
- Senator Jack Reed (RI)
- Senator Frank Lautenberg (NJ)

Republican Subcommittee Members:

- Senator Arlen Specter (Ranking Member) (PA)
- Senator Thad Cochran (MS)
- Senator Judd Gregg (NH)
- Senator Larry Craig (ID)
- Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (TX)
- Senator Ted Stevens (AK)
- Senator Richard Shelby (AL)

House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Democratic Subcommittee Members:

- **Chair: Dave Obey (WI)**
- Nita M. Lowey (NY)
- Rosa L. DeLauro (CT)
- Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (IL)
- Patrick J. Kennedy (RI)
- Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA)
- Barbara Lee (CA)
- Tom Udall (NM)
- Michael Honda (CA)
- Betty McCollum (MN)
- Tim Ryan (OH)

Republican Subcommittee Members:

- **Ranking Member: James T. Walsh (NY)**
- Ralph Regula (OH)
- John E. Peterson (PA)
- Dave Weldon (FL)
- Michael K. Simpson (ID)
- Dennis R. Rehberg (MT)
- Jerry Lewis (CA), Ex Officio