

## *Why should I care?*

While the U.S. spends the most money on health care, we still lag behind other high-income nations on a number of health outcomes. For example, in 2013, health care spending ate up more than 17 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product — that's about 50 percent *more* than many other industrialized nations.<sup>1</sup> Yet we rank 28th out of 43 nations in terms of life expectancy.<sup>2</sup> Also striking is the fact that only 3 percent of our health care spending is focused on prevention and public health, when 75 percent of our health care costs are related to preventable conditions.<sup>3 4</sup>

**We can't drive the change to create the healthiest nation unless we strengthen public health infrastructure and capacity.** Strong and consistent funding levels are necessary for our public health system to respond to everyday health needs, sustain hard-fought health gains and prepare for unexpected health emergencies.

## *What can I do to help support our public health infrastructure?*

**[Tell Congress to support the Prevention and Public Health Fund!](#)** To date, the fund has directed billions of dollars toward effective and proven efforts such as childhood obesity prevention and tobacco cessation. The fund is used to support community and clinical prevention efforts, strengthen state and local health departments and the public health workforce, and support critical science and research. These are the kinds of investments that are crucial to both reducing health care spending and improving people's health in the long term.

Unfortunately, the Prevention and Public Health Fund faces a very uncertain future. It's vital that members of Congress hear from advocates like you about how the fund is supporting important prevention and public health activities in your state and community. Let your policymakers know that preventing disease is just as — or even more — important as treating disease. **[Send them your message today!](#)**

**[Advocate for funding public health agencies.](#)** We need more Americans to speak out in support of higher budgets for key public health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a major source of funding for state and local public health, and the Health Resources and Services Administration, which strengthens the health workforce and ensures the delivery of quality health services.

**[Tell Congress to support the Affordable Care Act!](#)** Continued implementation of the ACA is critical to achieving the full potential of the law and shifting to a health system that focuses on *keeping people healthy*. Ensuring access to affordable health insurance — and thus, access to timely medical care — is key to creating the healthiest nation. It also allows public health workers to shift from providing safety net services to creating the conditions that prevent disease, injury and premature death in the first place.

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<sup>1</sup> The Commonwealth Fund: [www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/press-releases/2015/oct/us-spends-more-on-health-care-than-other-nations](http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/press-releases/2015/oct/us-spends-more-on-health-care-than-other-nations)

<sup>2</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Life Expectancy at Birth: <https://data.oecd.org/healthstat/life-expectancy-at-birth.htm>

<sup>3</sup> National Health Expenditure Data. Baltimore, MD: U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, December 2014. Available online at <http://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/NationalHealthAccountsHistorical.html>

<sup>4</sup> For the Public's Health: Investing in a Healthier Future. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Medicine, April 2012. Available online at: [http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/reports/2012/for-the-publics-health-investing-in-a-healthier-future.aspx?\\_ga=1.95005852.1207633591.1489420565](http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/reports/2012/for-the-publics-health-investing-in-a-healthier-future.aspx?_ga=1.95005852.1207633591.1489420565)



The American Public Health Association champions the health of all people and all communities. We strengthen the profession of public health, promote best practices and share the latest public health research and information. We are the only organization that influences federal policy, has a 140-plus year perspective and brings together members from all fields of public health.

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