

Why should I care?

In 2016, health care ate up nearly 18 percent¹ of the U.S. gross domestic product — that’s *many, many times* more than any other country.^{1,2} Yet we still lag behind many of our peers on a number of critical health outcomes. For example, we rank last for life expectancy among a dozen comparable countries, such as Japan, Australia, France, Canada and Germany.³ Health officials reported in late 2017 that American life expectancy had dropped for the second year in a row.⁴ We can and must do better.

To drive the kind of change needed to create the healthiest nation, we must strengthen public health infrastructure and capacity. Strong and consistent funding levels are necessary for our public health system to respond to and monitor community health needs, sustain hard-fought health gains, prepare for unexpected emergencies and outbreaks and advance the practice and science of prevention.

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

Tell Congress to support the Affordable Care Act’s Prevention and Public Health Fund⁵! 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.

Also, the Fund is now wholly intertwined with the federal public health budget, filling in funding gaps for routine and critical public health services, such as childhood immunizations and laboratory testing. If Congress repeals the ACA, agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention could experience severe budget shortfalls.

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 CDC, a major source of funding for state and local public health agencies, as well as the Health Resources and Services Administration, which strengthens the health workforce and ensures the delivery of quality health services.

¹ Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services: www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/NationalHealthAccountsHistorical.html

² Commonwealth Fund: www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/press-releases/2015/oct/us-spends-more-on-health-care-than-other-nations

³ Peterson-Kaiser Health System Tracker: www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/u-s-life-expectancy-compare-countries/?_sf_s=life#item-u-s-lowest-life-expectancy-birth-among-comparable-countries

⁴ National Center for Health Statistics: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db293.pdf

⁵ 5 APHA Prevention and Public Health Fund: www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-reform/prevention-and-public-health-fund

[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 and preventive care — is key to creating the healthiest nation. It also allows public health workers to shift from providing safety net services to creating the community conditions that prevent disease, injury and premature death in the first place.



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.

Learn more at www.apha.org

APHA | 800 I Street, NW | Washington, DC 20001 | 202-777-2742