September 20, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the nation’s state and local governmental public health laboratories, we are writing to warn of the dire consequences of repealing the Prevention and Public Health Fund (the Prevention Fund), as envisioned in the Graham-Cassidy healthcare legislation. We were pleased to join 520 organizations on May 17, 2017 correspondence to you that detailed the profound negative impact that repeal of the Prevention Fund would have on funding for the activities supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Specifically, the Prevention Fund has provided CDC with an increasing portion of programmatic funding — and now is the source of almost $1 billion annually, or 12% of CDC's annual budget. The Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) grant program is a critical source of federal funding for state and local health laboratories and it has received $40 million from the Prevention Fund each year. Those monies have been distributed to state and six local public health laboratories where they were utilized for a number of improvements in personnel and information technology. Importantly, these Prevention Fund monies for ELC provide the only flexible funding for state and local governments that enables them to respond quickly to public health emergencies like the Zika virus outbreak.

Elimination of the Prevention Fund in the absence of an alternative source for the almost $1 billion that CDC receives would be hugely disruptive to federal, state and local governments and especially to their ability to respond to the next public health emergency. Please do not agree to healthcare legislation that produces this result and endangers the health of the American people by short-circuiting public health.

Please contact us should have any questions.

With best regards,

Scott J. Becker, MS
Executive Director