

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
The Honorable Frank Pallone
House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 8, 2025

Dear Chair Guthrie and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the undersigned 87 organizations, we are writing in support of H.R. 4445, legislation to reauthorize the bipartisan-supported Public Health and Bio-Preparedness Workforce Loan Repayment Programs sponsored by Reps. Jason Crow (D-CO) and Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA). Our organizations urge the subcommittee to swiftly consider this important legislation as soon as possible this year. These targeted programs are needed to incentivize individuals to pursue careers in public health and infectious diseases (ID) by providing up to three years of loan repayment in exchange for service in rural communities and other areas with health professional shortages, as well as federal facilities like VA hospitals, Ryan White clinics, and community health centers.

The local and state public health workforce is the backbone of the nation's governmental public health system but is also facing an emergency. In the decade preceding the pandemic, state and local health departments lost 15 percent of essential staff. While public health staffing levels grew due to increased public health funding during the pandemic, those gains are temporary and it is estimated that 80,000 more full-time equivalents are needed to provide a minimum package of public health services.¹ Moreover, there has been significant turnover, and while all health departments need additional highly-qualified staff, one of the most acute needs is in small local health departments, which often serve rural communities.² Without sufficient funding to recruit and retain staff, health departments cannot provide essential services like screening and treatment for both chronic and communicable diseases; maternal and child health services; epidemiology and surveillance; routine immunizations; primary prevention services; and inspection or licensing activities. Local and state health departments are also our nation's first line response to public health emergencies. An underinvestment in the public health workforce leaves our communities under-prepared to respond to emergencies, including infectious disease outbreaks, environmental hazards, and weather-related events.

ID health professionals help make health care safer and more effective by preventing and treating infections associated with surgeries and cancer care. Patients with serious infections have better outcomes and lower health care costs when they are seen by an ID physician. Unfortunately, the ID workforce is also in crisis. In 2024, 80 percent of U.S. counties lacked an ID physician, and just over half of ID physician training programs filled, compared to most other physician specialties which filled nearly all their programs. Average medical student debt is \$250,000, making a lower-paying specialty like ID frequently out of reach. A quarter of health care facilities have reported a vacant infection preventionist position. A 2019 survey showed a vacancy rate for clinical microbiologists of over 10 percent. Communities without ID health care professionals will be less equipped to respond to threats like antimicrobial resistance, health care associated infections, sepsis, and infectious diseases associated

¹ <https://debeaumont.org/staffing-up/>

² [NACCHO-2022-Profile-Report.pdf](#)

with the opioid epidemic, and less able to advance the End the HIV Epidemic initiative and eliminate viral hepatitis.

As the Subcommittee considers legislation this year, we urge you to reauthorize the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program and the Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program this year. These bipartisan, commonsense recruitment tools will help ensure our public health and ID workforces can keep our communities safe and healthy in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Act Now: End AIDS (ANEA) Coalition
African American Health Alliance
AIDS Action Baltimore
AIDS Alabama
AIDS Foundation Chicago
AIDS United
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American Geriatrics Society
American Nurses Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
Aspetuck Health District
Association for Diagnostics and Laboratory Medicine
Association for Molecular Pathology
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
CAEAR Coalition
CenterLink
Coai, Inc.
Coalición de Coaliciones
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials
Connecticut Association of Directors of Health
Delaware HIV Consortium
Equity Is the Word
Family Health Centers at NYU Langone
Georgia AIDS Coalition
Gerontological Society of America
Global Network of Black People working in HIV
GMHC
Grady Health System
Health Officers Association of California
Hep Free Hawai'i
HHHRC
HIV Dental Alliance

HIV Medicine Association
Housing Works, Inc.
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Association of Providers of AIDS Care
Juliano
Kansas Association of Local Health Departments
Latino Commission on AIDS
Local Public Health Association of Minnesota
Maryland Association of County Health Officers
Massachusetts Health Officers Association
MercyOne Medical Center
Missouri Public Health Association
Musculoskeletal Infection Society
NASTAD
National Alliance for HIV Education and Workforce Development
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of Health
National Environmental Health Association
National Pharmaceutical Association
National Working Positive Coalition
New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials (NJACCHO)
New Jersey Environmental Health Association
NMAC
North Central District Health Department
Northeast District Department of Health
NTM Info & Research, Inc.
Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials
Oregon State University
PA Education Association
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
Positive Impact Health Centers
PrEP4All
Prevent Blindness
Prism Health North Texas
Rhode Island Public Health Institute & Open Door Health
Rural AIDS Action Network
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Save HIV Funding
Society for Public Health Education
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists
Stuart B. Levy Center for Integrated Management of Antimicrobial Resistance at Tufts
Texas Association of City & County Health Officials
The AIDS Institute
Trinity Health
Trust for America's Health
Washington State Public Health Association
Waves Ahead Corp
Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards

Wisconsin Public Health Association