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President's budget falls short on funding public health programs, strengthens others

Cuts to public health jeopardize our nation's economic health and competitive edge

Washington, D.C., April 10, 2013 – The following is a statement from Georges Benjamin, MD, executive director of the American Public Health Association.

“President Barack Obama’s budget proposal for fiscal year 2014 released today falls short on adequately funding key federal programs that protect public health and prevent leading causes of premature death and disability in the U.S. APHA recognizes that amid today’s tough fiscal environment, it is necessary to take a balanced approach to deficit reduction, though not at the expense of our nation’s health and well-being. Long-term health consequences such as rising chronic disease rates and increased hospitalizations will far outweigh short-term savings. APHA is pleased to see that the budget takes steps necessary to avoid steep budget cuts known as sequestration, a welcome sign of progress for the nation’s physical and fiscal health.

“Today’s proposed budget includes a more than \$430 million cut to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s budget authority, a 7.7 percent reduction compared to fiscal year 2012. This puts CDC’s budget authority at a lower level than in 2003. The proposal reduces the budget authority of the Health Resources and Services Administration by \$190 million compared to fiscal year 2012.

“Cuts outlined in today’s budget will hamper the capacity of state and local public health departments, already beset by drastic spending cuts, to do their work including detect and respond to disease threats, confront gun violence, curb obesity rates and ensure clean air and water.

“The good news is we are already fulfilling the promise of prevention and creating a health system that keeps people from getting sick and injured before it becomes too difficult and costly to treat. Thanks to the Prevention and Public Health Fund, communities are beginning to place an increased emphasis on health through tobacco control efforts, healthy eating and active living initiatives, improved access to preventive services and more. APHA strongly underscores that the fund is not intended to backfill other programs and deserves our full support.

“APHA is pleased that the budget proposal calls for a 94-cent per pack increase in the federal cigarette tax, with a similar tax increase on other tobacco products. Taxing products is a proven way to reduce tobacco use rates and discourage people from picking up the deadly addiction, and we are glad that revenue from this measure would be dedicated to addressing important public health issues. We are also encouraged by the president’s commitment to gun violence prevention as indicated in the \$30 million requested in new investments in research for CDC and National Violent Death Reporting System.

“APHA looks forward to working with the administration and Congress to ensure adequate funding for important prevention and health promotion programs that help make and keep America healthy.”

For more about APHA, visit www.apha.org.

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Founded in 1872, the APHA is the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world. The association aims to protect all Americans and their communities from preventable, serious health threats and strives to assure community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities and preventive health services are universally accessible in the United States. APHA represents a broad array of health providers, educators, environmentalists, policy-makers and health officials at all levels working both within and outside governmental organizations and educational institutions. More information is available at www.apha.org.