

March 28, 2013

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert Humphrey Building, 620E
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

The undersigned national public health associations represent the leadership and staff of our nation's state and local public health agencies. We write today to ask for your assistance in expediting the communication of key details regarding the sequester reductions that will apply to public health programs administered by the states and their local partners. As you may know, most Department of Health and Human Service (HHS) grantees received an initial communication on March 4 with general information about the initiation of the sequester. However, in the subsequent three weeks it does not appear that any additional information has been shared with state or local grantees.

We fully understand the unprecedented nature of the current situation and further understand the complexity of administering cuts this far into the fiscal year. We further recognize that the Department is not the cause of these cuts. However, the lack of communication of any additional information to your partners on the front lines working to protect and promote the health of the American people only exacerbates the uncertainty and confusion caused by sequestration. Many programs cannot even accurately project the impact of sequestration without information on the actual amount and timing of the cuts.

Accordingly we request your assistance in expediting and facilitating communication between the Department's many dedicated project officers and their partners in state and local government. Even if all that can be shared at this point is estimated timelines for notification that would be helpful. We would appreciate if your office could advise when additional information is expected to be available by contacting Dr. Paul Jarris, ASTHO Executive Director at pjarris@astho.org or 202.371.9090. Please let us know if you need additional information and thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Directors of Health Promotion and Education
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems

National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
National Coalition of STD Directors
Safe States Alliance
The Association of Public Health Nurses

cc: David Agnew, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs
Marc Garufi, Chief of Public Health Branch, Office of Management and Budget
Paul T. Dioguardi, Director of the Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs
Norris Cochran, Deputy Assistant Secretary, HHS Office of Budget
Dr. Thomas Frieden, Director of CDC
Mary Wakefield, PhD, Administrator of HRSA
Pamela Hyde, JD, SAMHSA Administrator
Dr. Margaret Hamburg, Commissioner of FDA
Dr. Nicole Lurie, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response