



March 19, 2012

The Honorable Dennis R. Rehberg
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency. Housed within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it provides critical data on all aspects of our health care system through data cooperatives and surveys that serve as a gold standard for data collection around the world. The Friends of NCHS endorses the president's fiscal year 2013 request of **\$162 million for the agency's base discretionary budget**. This funding will build on your previous investments and put the agency on track to become a fully-functioning, 21st century, national statistical agency.

NCHS collects data on chronic disease prevalence, health care disparities, emergency room use, teen pregnancy, infant mortality, causes of death, and rates of insurance, to name a few. These data are used by the Census Bureau in informing its population estimates and projections; by USDA in developing nutrition policies that undergird multibillion dollar federal food assistance programs; by state and local governments and public health officials; by federal policymakers; and by demographers, epidemiologists, health services researchers, and other scientists. The health data collected by NCHS are an essential part of the nation's statistical and public health infrastructure, as demonstrated by the breadth of organizations participating in the Friends of NCHS.

The undersigned organizations greatly appreciate your leadership in securing steady and sustained funding increases for NCHS over the last five fiscal years. Your support has helped NCHS rebuild after years of underinvestment and restore the collection of essential health data. With your continued support, NCHS will modernize its data collection efforts to produce higher quality, more timely data. For example, the President's budget request will allow NCHS to support all states in collecting consistent, comprehensive birth and death data and implement electronic records to enhance data timeliness and security. The president's request will also allow for the expansion of the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) to better assess Americans' access to, and use of, health care services.

As you prepare the FY 2013 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, we respectfully ask that you provide NCHS with **\$162 million**, consistent with the President's budget request, to strengthen these and other important data collection and quality improvement initiatives. The Friends of NCHS thanks you for recognizing benefits of and need for timely, valid data and statistics to strengthen health policy development here in the United States and around the world. We look forward to helping you further strengthen the agency.

The Friends of the NCHS is a coalition of organizations that want to ensure the agency's continued vital role in monitoring our nation's health. For more information on the Friends of NCHS, contact the Emily Holubowich at 202.484.1100 or eholubowich@dc-crd.com.

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth
Advocates for Better Children's Diets
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American Heart Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Nephrology
American Statistical Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Population Centers
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
March of Dimes
Marketing Research Association
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
Population Association of America
Society for Women's Health Research