



April 19, 2013

The Honorable Jack Kingston
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 Kingston 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 undersigned members of the Friends of NCHS recommend a funding level of **\$181.5 million in FY 2014, consistent with the president's budget request.**¹

NCHS collects data on chronic disease prevalence, health 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.

We greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's longstanding leadership in securing steady and sustained funding increases for NCHS. Your support has helped NCHS rebuild after years of underinvestment and stabilize the collection of essential health data. For example, NCHS has funded states and territories to modernize the National Vital Statistics System—moving from paper based to electronic filing of birth and death statistics. Because of these and other data processing enhancements, NCHS has been able to speed the release birth and death statistics in response to the user community's needs.

With your continued support, NCHS will further modernize its data collection efforts to produce higher quality, more timely data. For example, our request would allow NCHS to support all states in implementing electronic death registration systems (EDRS) to enhance data timeliness and security. Our request will also allow for the expansion of the National Health Interview Survey to better assess Americans' access to, and use of, health care services.

As you prepare the FY 2014 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, we respectfully ask that you provide NCHS with **\$181.5 million** to strengthen these and other important data collection and quality improvement initiatives. The Friends of NCHS thanks you for your ongoing support of health data and looks 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 Lindsey Horan at 202.292.6718 or lindsey.horan@academyhealth.org.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
AcademyHealth
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Dental Research
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Medical Informatics Association
American Pediatric Society
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Nutrition
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Arthritis Foundation
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS)
March of Dimes
National LGBT Cancer Network
National Psoriasis Foundation
Population Association of America
Society for Pediatric Research
The Gerontological Society of America
The Southeast Michigan Census Council

¹ This level reflects a \$20 million adjustment to accommodate implementation of CDC's new working capital fund (WCF). This is a new approach for funding internal business services that allows CDC to charge fees for services and finance WCF operations. NCHS will pay for business services out of its budget, where in the past these services, such as human resources, IT services, and financial management, were funded centrally. To allow NCHS to pay for these services, money that was appropriated centrally is being added to the NCHS budget, approximately \$20 million.