



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

For science. For action. For health.

March 4, 2021

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write in strong support of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This important legislation includes many of the provisions called for under President Biden's American Rescue Plan that are critical to combating the many challenges faced by the nation as we continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic. I strongly urge your support for this much needed legislation which will provide a more robust federal response to the pandemic including urgent resources to our nation's public health system and critical support for the millions of Americans whose health and economic well-being have been harmed by this ongoing public health emergency.

We are very pleased that the American Rescue Plan Act includes important resources to support the nation's public health system. The legislation provides essential funding for strengthening the public health workforce, including more than \$7.6 billion to hire contact tracers, public health nurses, epidemiologists, community health workers and other essential workers to help assist in the efforts to address COVID-19. The legislation would also provide significant funding to bolster the nation's vaccine distribution and administration efforts, including \$7.5 billion to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to plan, prepare for, promote, distribute, administer, monitor and track COVID-19 vaccines, including providing support for state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments. The bill would also provide more than \$50 billion for testing, contact tracing and mitigation efforts, public health data surveillance and analytics infrastructure modernization initiatives, global health activities and genomic sequencing and disease surveillance activities.

The legislation also provides a number of critical provisions to support the millions of Americans who have lost their jobs, housing, or health insurance or who have faced other economic hardships during the pandemic. Importantly, the bill would help expand access to health insurance coverage, making it more accessible and affordable by enhancing premium tax credits for plans in the Affordable Care Act marketplace for 2021 and 2022 and providing assistance for costs associated with COBRA coverage premiums. It would also temporarily provide additional federal funding to incentivize states that have not yet expanded Medicaid coverage through the ACA to do so, which would provide millions of uninsured low-income adults with access to quality health coverage. The bill would also help fight hunger in the nation during the pandemic by extending the duration of increased benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and increasing support for other important nutrition programs. Additionally, the

legislation would extend tax credits for paid sick and paid family leave, provide additional funding for mental health and substance use disorder services, increase resources for housing assistance and expand unemployment benefits among other provisions.

This critical legislation is crucial to our ongoing efforts to combat COVID-19 and its impact on the nation, especially our most vulnerable communities. We urge your support for this important legislation and urge you to oppose any efforts to weaken the bill's important public health provisions. In addition, we look forward to working with you and the Biden Administration to support additional measures that will be needed to strengthen our public health system and workforce, protect worker safety and to ensure the health and well-being of all Americans during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "G".

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director