



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

For science. For action. For health.

December 11, 2019

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

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 to urge your support for H.R. 3, the Lower Drug Costs Now Act. In addition to lowering out-of-pocket drug costs for millions of Americans, this legislation would provide for significant investments in critical public health programs. H.R. 3 is a progressive step towards ensuring that all Americans can afford and access the health care and services they need, and we urge your support for this legislation when it comes to the floor for a vote this week.

According to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation/New York Times study, more than one in four Americans had trouble paying a medical bill. In many cases, this leads to medical debt, or in extreme cases bankruptcy, which in turn can cause people to cut back on other essentials such as food and basic household items. According to the KFF/NYT study, more than half of individuals reported prescription drug costs as the primary cause of their medical debt. Medical costs and debts are also a significant influence in an individual's decision to seek or forego medical care, which can jeopardize their individual health and the public's health. For individuals reliant on prescription drugs to maintain their health status, this can mean drug rationing, which can be deadly. The Lower Drug Costs Now Act includes important provisions to lower excessive drug costs, providing much needed financial relief for millions of Americans.

As an organization dedicated to achieving health equity, we applaud the inclusion of several provisions in this legislation that reduce barriers and expand services to support individuals and communities to reach their full health potential. Specifically, H.R. 3:

- Enhances funding for community health centers, which provide culturally competent, affordable care for millions of people across the nation;
- Improves Medicare services and programs that provide assistance to reduce out-of-pocket costs for America's seniors; and
- Authorizes new resources to combat the opioid crisis.

Additionally, in an effort to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity in the U.S., H.R. 3 includes a provision that would double federal investment in the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program and quadruple federal investment in tribal communities. Research shows that home visiting programs have proven success in reducing maternal death by identifying and addressing risk factors that influence maternal health outcomes. These programs have been

particularly successful in reaching at-risk populations by providing culturally competent solutions in underserved and vulnerable populations. The majority of maternal mortality and morbidity in the U.S. is preventable and home visiting programs are an evidence-based solution to mitigate these risks. The increased funding levels provided in H.R. 3 would expand the reach of home visiting programs and support more women and families to improve maternal health outcomes.

Thank you again for your attention to our position on this important legislation. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to enact this and other legislation to reduce barriers that contribute to health inequities in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "G".

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director