



**Association of
American Medical Colleges**
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October 1, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I write to thank you for introducing the Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act. The AAMC is pleased to support this important legislation to promote better health for all by investing in public health infrastructure at health departments across the country.

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through medical education, patient care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 155 accredited U.S. medical schools; more than 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their more than 179,000 full-time faculty members, 92,000 medical students, 140,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences.

After decades of chronic underfunding at the national, state, and local levels, the country's public health system has been forced to combat the wide-ranging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, layered on top of myriad other pervasive health challenges and threats. In *The Way Forward on COVID-19: A Road Map to Reset the Nation's Approach to the Pandemic*, released July 29th, the AAMC put forward nine immediate evidence-based actions to address the current public health emergency, as well as two long-term actions, including the need to strengthen the nation's public health infrastructure.

To date, the federal funding strategy for public health primarily has favored a crisis-response approach over robust, sustained investment, and fiscal challenges at the state and local level have further compounded the pressures on health departments nationwide. For example, according to the National Association of City and County Health Officials, workforce capacity at local health departments across the country has dropped 21% over the last decade. Consequently, foundational public health capabilities have been strained at almost every level, as looming and ongoing threats far outpace available resources, leaving our country ill-equipped to respond.

Your legislation would provide critical support to recover some of this lost capacity and to stabilize investment over the long-term. By providing dedicated, reliable funding to augment annual federal appropriations, the bill will enable health departments to address core infrastructure needs, from bolstering public health surveillance and lab capacity to implementing strategies that advance equity.

To operate most optimally, the nation's health care system – including our member teaching hospitals and their affiliated medical school faculty – relies on a healthy public health infrastructure. Every individual benefits from a strong commitment to this goal. Thank you again, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this important legislation as it moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen D. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Fisher, JD
AAMC Chief Public Policy Officer