

May XX, 2011

Daniel Inouye, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Capitol, Room S-128
Washington, DC 20510

Thad Cochran, Vice Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, and
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor-HHS-Education
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Tom Harkin, Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

****an identical letter will also be sent to House appropriators**

Dear Senators Inouye, Cochran and Harkin:

We, the undersigned organizations and agencies, write to urge you to provide continued funding in FY2012 for two programs within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that are critical to our efforts to reduce obesity. Specifically, we ask that you provide:

- \$22.7 million for the Healthy Communities Program; and
- \$2.7 million for built environment activities within the National Center for Environmental Health

Obesity is putting a significant strain on our nation's ability to control health care costs. Nearly 17 percent of U.S. medical costs—or \$168 billion each year—can be attributed to obesity. Today, one in every three adults and nearly 1 in five children aged 6-19 are obese. Obesity has been linked to increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, arthritis-related disability, and some cancers.

Given our challenging economy and need to reduce the federal deficit, it is even more important that we make smart investments in low-cost solutions with high impact. These two programs within the CDC are critical to efforts to bring our obesity epidemic under control by providing families with the ability to be physically active and access healthy foods.

Since 2003, more than 300 communities of all sizes have been supported by the CDC's Healthy Communities Program. These communities are provided with very modest, one-time start-up grants (of approximately \$50,000) to advance strategies at the community-level that support healthy eating and physical activity, and ultimately reduce chronic disease and obesity. A recent report by the Trust for America's Health concluded that an investment of \$10 per person/per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition and prevent smoking could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within five years. This is a return of \$5.60 for every \$1.

The built environment funding at the CDC has supported the Healthy Community Design Initiative (HCDI), which provides essential national leadership on the impact of the built environment on health, particularly physical activity levels. Staff at HCDI provide expert assistance and consultation

to programs and initiatives across the CDC and HHS about the best program and policy approaches to create healthier built environments. HCDI has provided technical assistance, research, support and resources for public health workers on the built environment and health—including more than 500 health and planning professionals who received training in how to conduct Health Impact Assessments. This small \$2.7 million investment is critical to help public health officials, organizations and local communities make improvements to their built environment so that people can build physical activity in their daily lives.

The CDC's budget justification proposes that both of these initiatives be absorbed within the Community Transformation Grants (CTG). While we support CTG, we do not believe they are a replacement for these two initiatives. The President's proposed FY2012 budget describes CTG as a "large-scale" national investment in big cities and large metropolitan areas. Under this description, it will not support the hundreds of communities of all sizes currently supported by the Healthy Communities Program. And without the national expertise and leadership provided by the Healthy Community Design Initiative, we are concerned that the CTG recipients will not have the necessary support to make healthy changes to the built environment.

We ask that you ensure that the CDC's Healthy Communities Program is continued at \$22.7 million and that the CDC's built environment funding is continued at \$2.7 million in FY2012. Together, this \$25 million investment will help promote health and reduce obesity in communities across the country.

Sincerely,