

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 2, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

We write to express serious concerns regarding use of the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) to offset the costs of reauthorizing important bipartisan health initiatives. As Congress works to extend a number of vital health care programs, we encourage you to avoid further cutting the PPHF, which often works in tandem with many of these programs.

The value of prevention throughout our federal health care system cannot be overstated. In fact, the best way to combat public health outbreaks and emergencies is to prevent them before they arise. As the recent hurricanes, fires, and other natural disasters have reminded us, the federal government plays a key role in identifying and preventing public health threats. Our nation spends upwards of \$3 trillion annually on health care, but only an estimated three percent of this amount is dedicated to prevention and public health.

Recognizing the need to increase prevention efforts in order to meet the health challenges of the 21st Century, Congress created the PPHF and made the single largest investment in prevention, which Congress allocates through the annual appropriations process. However, discretionary spending restraints established by the Budget Control Act (Public Law 112-25) necessitated the additional use of the PPHF to fill funding gaps for longstanding, core public health activities at and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Today, the PPHF supplies roughly 12 percent of CDC's entire budget.

While we strongly support reauthorizing and funding the various health care initiatives that have expired or will soon expire, we are concerned about efforts to cut the PPHF to offset the costs of these programs. The CHAMPIONING HEALTHY KIDS Act under consideration in the House of Representatives this week would institute a \$10.5 billion reduction in the PPHF, a 75 percent cut. Using the PPHF as a piggy bank, even for important health programs, will result in major cuts to state, local, tribal, and territorial health departments, as well as other grantees working at the local level. This could mean the elimination of programs currently supported by the PPHF in every state, including: the section 317 immunization program for kids; epidemiology and laboratory capacity grants that support our state and local "disease detectives;" smoking cessation activities; lead poisoning prevention; and the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant.

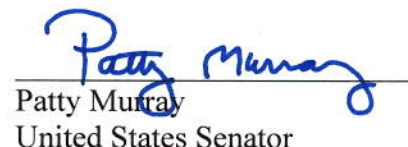
Issuing cuts to the PPHF to fund community health care programs is a clear example of robbing Peter to pay Paul and will have disastrous effects for the health of children and working families. It will also only further exacerbate the long-term problem of mounting health care spending. We urge you to avoid using the PPHF as an offset to pay for our vital health care programs and stand ready to work towards negotiating bipartisan offsets that do not come at the expense of the public's health.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



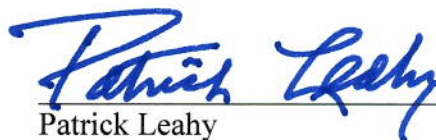
Al Franken
United States Senator



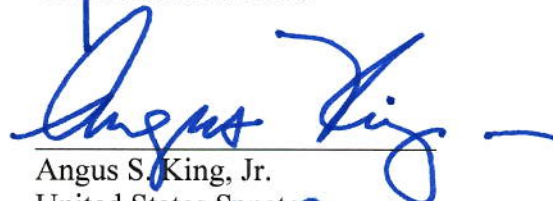
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



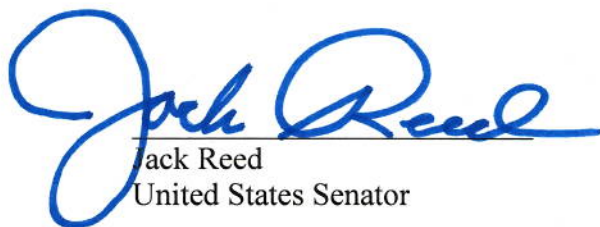
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



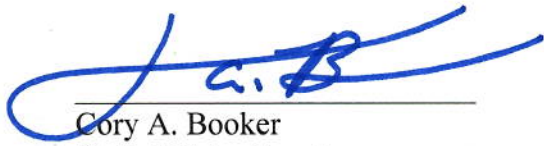
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



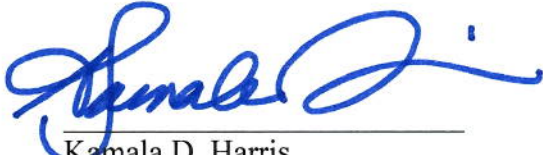
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



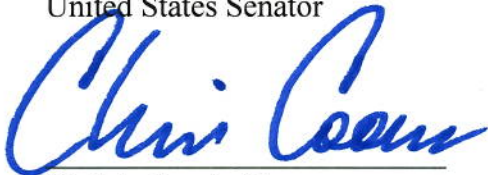
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



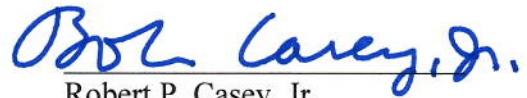
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator