

May 13th, 2025

Dear Members of Congress:

We are health care and public health professionals who daily confront social, economic, and environmental threats to human health that contribute to sickness, poor birth outcomes, developmental disorders among children, shortened lifespans, and expensive medical treatments. These threats include exposure to lead and lack of access to healthy food, medical care, and safe drinking water. As such, we write to express our alarm at proposed budget and spending cuts to essential food, water and healthcare programs, which we know will contribute to the burden of disease among the American people. We urge you to reject these cuts as well as the ongoing efforts to repeal basic public health protections like the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements.

## **1. Reject Budget Bill Cuts that Endanger Public Health**

In February, the House passed a budget reconciliation resolution (H.Con.Res.14) that directs Congressional committees to find deep cuts in government funding that will profoundly harm the health and wellbeing of millions of people in the country. In order to offset the cost of \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks that are weighted heavily towards corporations and the country's wealthiest individuals, the budget resolution directs major cuts in mandatory spending.

As the details of the budget bill are marked up, we implore you to protect public health and:

- **Reject cuts to programs that fight hunger.** The budget resolution directs cuts that jeopardizes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides food assistance to more than 40 million low-income people annually. While not in current House committee proposal, an earlier list of options also proposed cuts to the free school lunch program, which feeds millions of children while they learn.
- **Reject cuts to healthcare.** The budget resolution directs cuts that jeopardize the access to healthcare for the 73 million adults and children who rely on Medicaid.
- **Reject cuts to clean water.** While not in the current House committee proposal, earlier this year, the House Ways & Means Committee proposed removing the tax exemption on municipal bonds as a potential way to pay for tax cuts. About 90 percent of water projects are financed using local government borrowing, and removing the tax exemption on general obligation and revenue bonds would devastate local governments' ability to finance projects necessary for clean water. We remind you that we are each 60 percent water by weight. When

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drinking water is contaminated with pathogens or harmful chemicals, so, too, are our bodies.

## **2. Reject Appropriations Bill Cuts that Endanger Public Health**

As Congress works on the annual appropriations bill for fiscal year 2026, we implore you to ensure full funding for programs that protect our food, water and health.

- **Oppose spending cuts for USDA's and the CDC's food safety programs:** Notably, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service at the CDC is charged with protecting the health of US agriculture and natural resources against invasive pests and diseases including, H5N1 Avian Influenza. Bird flu is currently spreading - millions of birds have been infected and as of late January 65 cases had been transmitted to humans including two deaths. We need a strong federal response to get bird flu under control. Cuts to the services charged with doing this will result in more disease and even higher costs to consumers.
- **Oppose spending cuts to safe and clean water programs.** Last year, the House passed appropriations legislation that would have cut funding for the State Revolving Fund programs by 25 percent – the lowest levels in more than 15 years. This year may be even worse. Trump's budget proposed a nearly 90 percent cut with the goal of eliminating this funding. Poor water infrastructure results in diseases, including noroviruses, Legionella disease, and more. There are more than 7 million cases of waterborne diseases in the United States every year. As a result of these illnesses, more than 100,000 people are hospitalized and over 6,000 people die each year.

## **3. Reject Efforts to Repeal the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI)**

And lastly, please oppose efforts to repeal basic water safety regulations. We ask that you reject H.J.Res. 44 and any joint resolution to disapprove of and repeal the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) under the Congressional Review Act. Fortunately, the window of opportunity for the Senate to fast track the repeal has passed, and we urge you to not take up this resolution under normal procedures. The LCRI was a major improvement to the existing regulation limiting lead in drinking water. Most notably, it speeds up lead service line replacement, requiring most communities to replace lead services lines within a decade. Because lead service lines are the primary source of lead in water, replacing them with copper service lines will have profound public health

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impacts, particularly for our most vulnerable populations including infants whose developing brains and hearts can be permanently damaged by early-life exposure to lead.

There is no safe level of lead in drinking water, and it's especially dangerous for children. The EPA estimates that 9 million homes and other properties are still served through lead service lines. By removing them, the LCRI will have profound and measurable public health benefits: preventing risky low-birth weights in up to 900,000 infants, preventing developmental disorders in up to 2,600 children, and reducing up to 1,500 cases of premature death from heart disease.

Again, we urge your commitment to support common sense public health protections and to oppose measures that would jeopardize access to safe food and clean water.

Sincerely,

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