



**TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH WARNS CUTS TO STATE PUBLIC HEALTH BUDGETS, PROPOSED FEDERAL CUT TO CDC HARMFUL TO NATION'S HEALTH**

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**Washington, DC, February 12, 2004** – Trust for America's Health (TFAH) today released an analysis of the President's proposed budget for FY 2005 that found a \$105 million dollar decrease in federal funding for state and local bioterrorism preparedness. A December 2003 report, "Ready or Not? Protecting the Public's Health in the Age of Bioterrorism," by TFAH revealed that two-thirds of states cut their public health budgets from fiscal year 2002 to 2003. The cuts to state and federal funds compound each other, resulting in severe negative consequences to crucial public health programs.

A report issued by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) on February 10, "HHS Bioterrorism Preparedness Programs: States Reported Progress But Fell Short on Program Goals for 2002," also concluded that "states are more prepared now than they were prior to these [CDC and HRSA cooperative agreement] programs, but much remains to be accomplished."

"Preventing -- and combating -- bioterrorism and other health threats is the unique responsibility of the public health system. As Americans, we have long taken special pride that our nation has set the pace for disease prevention and control worldwide," said Shelley A. Hearne, Dr.PH, Executive Director of the TFAH in testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform today.

"But today, America's public health system is being stretched to the breaking point. In fact, even as it is given new responsibilities in the War on Terrorism, America's public health system is still struggling to carry out its peace time mission," Hearne continued.

A poll conducted in January 2004 by TFAH and the American Cancer Society revealed that more than three out of four Americans say the government needs to spend more on health priorities and a majority of respondents felt that investing in public health is vital to homeland security.

Among items TFAH found of particular concern in the proposed FY05 budget:

- A decrease of approximately \$1.1 billion in discretionary spending for "Function 550," the budget account that finances federal programs dedicated to preventing disease, advancing medical knowledge, delivering key health care services, ensuring food safety and training a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.
- A cut of nearly 3 percent of the total budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Despite recent reports finding that states are only somewhat better prepared to handle a bioterror attack, including one this week from the GAO, CDC's state and local bioterrorism preparedness program received a 11 percent cut or a \$105 million reduction.

- The \$130 million allocated to CDC's BioSense (Bio-Surveillance Initiative) was subtracted from, rather than added to the amount for capacity building funds for states' bioterrorism preparedness. BioSense will improve the government's capacity to rapidly identify bioterror attacks, but should not come at the expense of local and state "all-hazards" preparedness efforts.
- The CDC-wide pandemic flu funds are level funded, although with the emergence of avian flu, the risk of pandemic flu has increased.
- The Extramural Prevention Research was "zeroed out" from \$16 million in FY04.
- Public Health Improvements programs, which support work to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities, strengthen the community practice of public health and build real-time information networks, received a 64 percent cut.
- The Youth Media Campaign program, efforts targeted at increasing and maintaining physical activity among teens, received an 86 percent cut. This cut runs counter to government-wide efforts to reduce obesity, caused in part by sedentary lifestyles.

TFAH commends the following budget enhancements:

- The Steps to a Healthier US, an initiative aimed to reduce rates of diabetes, obesity and asthma, received a 185 percent increase.
- The Infectious Disease Control Center received an 8.46 percent increase, including \$126 million to combat West Nile Virus. CDC's Global Disease Detection Initiative, intended to improve global capacity for disease detection and outbreak response, received an additional \$27.5 million.
- Autism and folic acid programs each received a 20 percent increase.
- The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program is slated for a \$10 million increase, while the Prostrate Cancer Program will receive an additional \$42 million.

Dr. Hearne's complete testimony is available on the TFAH Web site, [www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org).

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*Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.*