



Trust for America's Health Issues "Critical Care" Watch List of Endangered Bioterrorism and Health Programs Resulting from State Budget Crises

Chemical Terrorism, Birth Defects, Cancer, and Injury Prevention Efforts among Those in Jeopardy

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Washington, DC, March 4, 2003 – Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a nonprofit advocacy group focused on improving the nation's health, today issued a "Critical Care" Watch List of crucial public health programs at risk for cuts in state budgets. Several proposed state budgets for FY'04 include drastic cuts to programs urgently needed to protect communities from a wide range of health threats, including bioterrorism and diseases like cancer.

"Proposed state budget cuts to critical public health programs are a Code Red health emergency," said Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of TFAH. "States are clearly struggling with difficult decisions, but harming our health is too high a price for us to pay. Fiscal and wartime crises make investing in our health defenses more important than ever – saving us billions of dollars and immeasurable amounts of suffering in the long run."

TFAH is calling for a concerted public health response to terrorist threats, which can also protect communities from a range of existing and emerging health threats. As states and local communities are using federal funds received for bioterrorism preparedness, they have the opportunity to put the money to work to do "double duty" to revitalize the entire public health infrastructure. This will require stepped-up investments in our early-warning, communications, and rapid-response systems; better laboratories and health departments at the local, state, and federal levels; and the training of more public health professionals.

TFAH's Critical Care Watch List of public health programs in jeopardy in many states includes:

- Disease prevention
 - Chronic disease prevention, including cancer, diabetes, asthma, osteoporosis, Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, and arthritis, among others
 - Emerging infectious disease prevention, including tuberculosis and West Nile Virus
 - Food borne disease prevention, including E.coli and salmonella poisoning, Mad Cow Disease, and Chronic Wasting Disease impacting deer and elk
 - AIDS and other sexually transmitted disease prevention and treatment
 - Childhood vaccinations
 - Registries that track and help prevent diseases including birth defects and cancer
- Trauma and injury prevention
 - Including car accidents and violence
 - Poison control
- Environmental health, which includes testing, diagnosis, and treatment for possible chemical terrorist attacks
 - Food safety and water testing
- Community Health Centers

- Public health laboratories, including technical personnel who are the first responders relied on to provide identification of potential biological, chemical, or radiological threats to communities.

Reductions in state general revenue funds to many of these programs could also result in a loss of federal grant dollars, which are often tied to the levels of state funding.

Trust for America's Health (TFAH) is a national nonprofit whose mission is to protect the health and safety of all communities from current and emerging threats by strengthening the fundamentals of our public health defenses. More information about TFAH is available at www.healthyamericans.org.

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