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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Deadline: Friday May 6<sup>th</sup>

April 29, 2011

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary  
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

Thank you for your commitment to improving the health of all Americans. Out of support and concern, we write regarding funding for CDC's Healthy Communities Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. With the recently proposed cuts to CDC in the FY2011 budget, we are writing to urge you to maintain funding levels for the CDC's Healthy Communities Program.

The Healthy Communities Program provides modest funding to communities of all sizes—small, medium and large, rural, urban and suburban—and it places a strong emphasis on providing communities with the foundational knowledge to make changes in environments that enhance healthy options, leading to improved health outcomes.

Since 2003 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with national networks of community-based organizations, has funded hundreds of communities, scaling this work in all 50 states. Those national organizations include YMCA of the USA, National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Recreation and Park Association and Society for Public Health Education.

One of these CDC-funded national organizations, YMCA of the USA (Y-USA), which has been funded by CDC since 2004, has supported close to 200 communities to become healthier places to live. With one-time start up funding of approximately \$50,000 to teams of local leaders, communities have leveraged \$3 for each federal \$1 and have sustained their work with technical assistance and resources they have secured.

A just-released survey by Y-USA reports on the deep impact these programs can have in communities across America (see Y-USA survey attached). In a recent sample of 91 of the 176 sites supported by Y-USA with funding from CDC's Healthy Community Program and additional resources leveraged through Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Childhood Obesity Prevention Fund, local leaders influenced 14,459 changes to support healthy living within their communities, impacting up to 34.3 million lives. Highlights from the recent survey include advancing:

- 568 strategies that provide greater access to healthier foods in communities, like 278 new community gardens, 75 new farmers markets, 65 mobile markets or stands and 32 new healthy corner stores.
- 318 strategies and encouraged changes in physical environments of our neighborhoods to provide greater access to physical activity, including 112 sidewalks designed or improved to increase physical activity, 71 traffic improvements or enhancements to increase physical activity and 52 "complete streets" open and accessible to all users.

- 4526 changes to ensure healthier food and beverages are sold to children and youth before during and after the school day, including 1262 after school sites that have made their snacks or meals healthier, 1014 schools that changed lunch menus to offer healthier options, and 294 school and 273 after school sites that have expanded participation in the USDA afterschool snack or breakfast program.
- 3223 changes that helped schools or afterschool sites incorporate more physical activity, including 1261 after school sites and 618 schools that have added or increased the amount of physical activity to their curricula, 172 schools that created or enhanced a Safe Routes to School Program, and 242 schools that expanded recess during the day.
- 2091 changes that have helped employers incorporate healthier food/beverage options or expand physical activity into their worksites, including 866 worksites that have incentivized their employees to engage in physical activity or nutrition education, 211 worksites that promoted commuting options that include physical activity from the worksite, and 368 worksites that improved food choices available at meetings.
- 2774 strategies that provide smoke free environments, including parks, buildings/worksites and public jurisdiction.

Another survey was just released by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD). NACDD was recently funded by CDC's Healthy Communities Program, and their survey shows an additional 3 million lives impacted by improved healthy living options available in 33 healthier community sites supported by NACDD (see NACDD survey attached).

While the President's FY2012 Budget called for the termination of CDC's Healthy Communities Program (HCP) (including ACHIEVE, Pioneering Healthier Communities, Strategic Alliance for Health sites) and the integration of these programs' goals and activities within the newly established Community Transformation Grants (CTG). We think it is essential to keep the CDC Healthier Communities Program funded as a standalone program in CDC's budget with its seven-year track record of small grants with deep impacts. The CDC Healthy Communities Program is complementary, but very different from the approach in the Community Transformation Grants program.

Additionally, the President's Budget referred to the Community Transformation Grants as a "large city, large scale" initiative. The CDC Healthy Communities Program is not limited to "large city, large scale" initiatives. In fact, the programs support small, mid-sized and large communities, in rural, suburban and urban sites. In locations of all sizes now, these programs create conditions which allow children and families to make healthier choices. The programs teach leaders "how to fish" and build healthy environments where kids and families live, work, learn and play and often leverage local resources for sustainability. Furthermore, they assure technical assistance and support to help eliminate inequities which themselves generate bad health outcomes (e.g. lack of a supermarket, no safe places to walk or bike or play, and access to healthy, affordable breakfasts for our children so they have an equal opportunity to learn).

For the modest investments, local resources leveraged and deep impacts resulting from the CDC Healthy Communities Program, we urge you to please ensure the continued funding in FY2011 and FY2012.

Sincerely,

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Mike Crapo  
United States Senator

CC:

Dr. Howard Koh, *Assistant Secretary for Health, HHS*

Ellen Murray, *Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, HHS*

Dr. Tom Frieden, *Director, CDC*