



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SUMMARY

Critical Support Needed to Strengthen Public Health Infrastructure in the US June 2021

- **What is this advocacy or science position statement and why is it important to AHA, the scientific community or the general public?**

A robust public health infrastructure enables communities, states, and the nation to engage in critical public health activities such as the prevention of chronic illness, infectious disease, and injuries, and response to public health threats and environmental hazards.¹ Unfortunately, the agencies responsible for protecting the public's health have consistently lacked adequate funding to support the training, recruitment, and retention of a robust public health workforce, modernizing data collection and management, and implementing impactful and scalable long-term health promotion and disease prevention initiatives. The paucity of comprehensive, accurate, and timely public health data makes it difficult to effectively monitor public health trends, determine where public health interventions should be targeted, and evaluate their impact. The difficulty the United States faced in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic underscores a concerning reality: the US public health infrastructure is ill-equipped to prevent and manage chronic disease, address social risk factors, and respond to the pandemic(s) that threaten the health and safety of Americans. Accordingly, the American Heart Association's (AHA) regards the expansion and modernization of our nation's public health infrastructure as a critical component of our fight against heart disease and stroke.

The American Heart Association supports strengthening public health infrastructure in the United States to improve chronic and infectious disease health outcomes. Specifically, we:

- Encourage policymakers at all levels of government to provide strong, sustained funding for the public health infrastructure.
 - Encourage federal and state officials to expand, enhance, and protect the public health workforce.
 - Encourage federal policymakers to invest in modernization of public health data collection both surveillance systems and survey technologies.
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- **How does this position align with AHA's mission and strategic goals?** The positioning aligns with the organization's commitment to improving the intersection between the access to care and the health care system and public health infrastructure (as articulated in our principles for healthcare reform).
 - **Is this position consistent with other AHA positions? If not, what are the implications for AHA, the scientific community or the general public?**

This is consistent with our position on funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state and local health departments and is vital for improving cardiovascular surveillance and creating a 50-state funding strategy at CDC across all of our cardiovascular health priorities.

- **What are the risks and benefits to the AHA?**

This statement aligns with an organization-wide commitment to equity, public health infrastructure and surveillance and is fundamental to our nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.



- **What is the timing and manner of publication?**

This policy guidance will be released in our semi-annual *Policy Report* this Fall and externally available on our AHA Policy Research website.

- **Who is the audience?**

Policy makers, advocates, public health practitioners, state/federal regulatory agencies, external partners, media.

- **How will impact be evaluated or measured?**

Tracking use of this statement in the national policy dialogue (social media, media, white papers, etc.)