



2021 Legislative Priorities for Public Health

North Carolina’s public health departments work to keep our communities safe and healthy. From responding to communicable diseases like COVID-19 to providing safety net healthcare for thousands of North Carolina’s adults and children to ensuring the safety of our environment, public health departments help protect all of us, every day. The North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors represents North Carolina’s front-line leaders in these efforts.

NICALHD leaders have identified policy priorities that are critical to improving and protecting public health in North Carolina. These priorities include:

Address the Critical Public Health Needs Revealed by the COVID-19 Pandemic

The current pandemic has made clear that local health departments need significant, recurring investment to address the immediate demands of the COVID-19 pandemic – including vaccine distribution – as well as ensure North Carolina’s long-term public health and economic recovery. In the last 10 years, cases of communicable diseases in North Carolina have increased by more than 200%, while state funding to address the challenge of communicable disease has remained stagnant. In FY 2017, the cost of responding to communicable diseases in North Carolina totaled more than \$20 million – with the state providing only 4.3% of that total. Providing an additional \$36 million to expand local infrastructure for communicable disease activities will reduce the spread of disease, protect the public, and prevent unnecessary healthcare costs.

Restore Women and Children’s Health Block Grant Funding to Local Health Departments

Federal Women and Children’s block grant funding has provided core capacity to local health departments to provide evidence-based programs for women and children in local communities and helps offset the cost of uninsured care. Unfortunately, since 2011, “carve outs” of the WCH Block Grant have increased from less than 10% of the total to almost 40% in 2017. The redirection of these funds has resulted in a \$2.2 million reduction to local health departments for critical services like maternal health, child health and women’s health services. Restoration of this funding is critical to improving the health of thousands of North Carolina children and mothers – and to reducing the state’s infant mortality rate.

Provide Healthcare for Uninsured North Carolinians

Adults who earn between \$737 a month and \$1,674 a month for a family of three in North Carolina are ineligible for both Medicaid and subsidies under the Affordable Care Act. Providing Medicaid coverage for these working North Carolinians would give health insurance to 500,000 uninsured North Carolinians and would protect vulnerable families in need of critical medical care.