

Dec. 18, 2017

The Honorable Eric Hargan
Acting Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Hargan:

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) is committed to promoting evidence-based best practices and policies informed by the best scientific evidence available. As such, I was concerned when reading recent reports in the media indicating that there is language (“banned words”) that may or may not be used by public health professionals at CDC as they develop budget documents for FY19. We are very pleased to see that Brenda Fitzgerald’s statement indicated that there are no “banned words” at CDC. We trust the same is also true for HHS.

As the national nonprofit organization representing the current and former leadership of public health agencies in the United States, the U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia, we remain committed to supporting our members and their mission to use evidence and scientific-based policies to ensure optimal health for all. Governmental public health works to keep all Americans healthy and safe and to prevent disease, injury, and premature death. Public health works at the national, state, and local levels to ensure health and well-being for the entire population, including marginalized and vulnerable persons and groups. To carry out this mission, science, evidence, and inclusion must remain the bedrock of policies formulated at HHS.

We look forward to working with the Administration and Congress to ensure the best scientific evidence is utilized and public health professionals are empowered to use language that appropriately conveys the public health policies and programs necessary to improve the health of the nation.

Sincerely,



Michael Fraser, PhD, MS, CAE, FCPP
Executive Director, ASTHO
Arlington, VA

Cc: Mick Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Jerome Adams, U.S. Surgeon General
Brenda Fitzgerald, Director, CDC
Laura Trueman, Acting Director, Officer of Intergovernmental and External Affairs