

2020 Federal Legislative Agenda

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) supports strengthening and preserving all programs that are effective to advancing the public’s health and well-being. Federal, state, and local public health programs have been historically underfunded and undervalued. ASTHO supports addressing the social determinants of health and preserving current federal investments for all of these efforts, including programs that ensure access to healthcare services. ASTHO also supports providing supplementary increases in funding without cutting other public health programs. The federal legislative priorities listed below reflect the most pressing needs of state and territorial health officials.

Tier I

ASTHO will play a lead role in advocacy for:

Sustained, predictable, and increased funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with an overall 22 percent increase in funding for the agency by 2022 (the “22 by 22” campaign for public health). Specific cross-cutting programs include:

- The Public Health Emergency Preparedness cooperative agreements
- Support for CDC programs funded via the Prevention and Public Health Fund.
- The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant.

Sustained, predictable, and increased funding for the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response programs including the Hospital Preparedness Program, the National Ebola Training and Education Center, and the National Ebola Treatment Network.

Promoting access to healthcare as a critical component of the U.S. public health system for states, territories, and tribes. Specifically:

- Supporting coverage for services, including primary care and preventive services, maternal and child health services, and community and social services that address the social determinants of health.
- Supporting legislation to develop a long-term solution to Medicaid financing for the U.S. territories.
- Advocating for a National Academy of Sciences report focused on a health assessment of the U.S. territories.

Tier II

ASTHO will actively work with key partners to:

Support funding for ASTHO affiliates’ programmatic priorities across HHS, with an emphasis on CDC, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration programs that fund state and territorial health agencies.

Support programs, policies, and funding to achieve the goals of the “Ending the HIV Epidemic” initiative.

Support funding and programs to combat healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial resistance, including promoting antibiotic stewardship and sepsis awareness, prevention, and treatment.

Support HHS policy and programs for public health data sharing, modernization efforts, and data governance.

Support HHS funding and programs to address maternal morbidity and mortality.

Support HHS funding and regulations to ensure a robust environmental health system.

Support funding and legislation to address substance abuse and misuse, including the opioid epidemic.

Support funding, legislation, and promulgation of regulations to support comprehensive tobacco control programs, which include e-cigarettes.

Support funding for CDC and FDA food safety and related programs.

Support policies and funding to address obesity, including increasing physical activity and access to healthy foods.

Support funding and policies to improve overall vaccination rates throughout the country.

Support funding for the U.S. Census Bureau to continue to collect data on racial and ethnic minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) populations; health outcomes; and factors influencing the social determinants of health.

Support a new healthy aging initiative to promote the health and well-being of older adults.

Authorize and reauthorize other public health programs as appropriate.

Tier III

ASTHO will monitor and support efforts as time and resources allow to:

Monitor and report on the following:

- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
- Housing and Urban Development
- Office of National Drug Control Policy
- Environmental Protection Agency
- HHS Office of Population Affairs
- Department of Homeland Security
- BioDetection 21 Initiative
- CDC Social Determinants of Health new initiative
- Public health workforce loan repayment

This legislative agenda is meant to guide ASTHO's federal advocacy work. ASTHO staff, with direction and oversight of the ASTHO Board of Directors and ASTHO Government Relations Committee, may have to reprioritize, add, or delete agenda items depending on emerging new initiatives, threats, and congressional activities.