

SAFE FOOD COALITION

1620 I Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006 202-939-1010

March 14, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Pelosi and Leader Schumer:

The undersigned members of the Safe Food Coalition write to strongly oppose the provision in the proposed American Health Care Act that would repeal the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which contributes over 12 percent of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) budget. The Safe Food Coalition is a group of consumer, trade union, and foodborne illness victim organizations dedicated to reducing foodborne illness by improving government food inspection programs.

Each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases. CDC plays the key role in public health system's ability to detect and respond to outbreaks of foodborne illness. Most foodborne illnesses are preventable, and timely investigation and reporting of foodborne disease outbreaks helps both to hold responsible parties accountable, and to generate data that public health authorities and the food industry can use to help target efforts to prevent contamination of foods on the farm, in processing, and in restaurants and homes.

Detection of multistate foodborne disease outbreaks has been revolutionized by programs like CDC's PulseNet, a national network of public health and food regulatory agencies that perform standardized molecular subtyping for enteric bacteria. A 12 percent cut to the agency's budget would create pressure to cut back on these programs, however, exposing more consumers to dangerous pathogens that go undetected. CDC has specifically used the Prevention and Public Health Fund to bolster the efforts of its state and local partners through initiatives like the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) program, which has led to increases in state and local health authorities' use of electronic laboratory reporting, and improvement in their information technology infrastructure. CDC estimates that these improvements have been critical to quickly resolving recent multi-state foodborne illness outbreaks, and that their impact on efforts to fight antibiotic resistance alone offer the promise of multi-billion dollar savings in healthcare spending over the next five years.

Funding to prevent foodborne illness saves both lives and money. When consumers lose confidence in food safety, food producers lose as well. For example, rural peanut farmers suffered an estimated \$1 billion in lost production and sales after unsanitary conditions and fraud at one company—Peanut Corporation of America—caused an outbreak of deadly Salmonellosis in 2009. The specter of tainted peanut butter contributed in part to broad, bipartisan support for passage of the Food Safety Modernization Act. However, without adequate surveillance of foodborne illnesses, and effective investigations into their underlying causes, regulators and food companies alike would be left in the dark.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge you to oppose the American Health Care Act.

Sincerely,

Center for Foodborne Illness Research and Prevention

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Consumer Federation of America

Consumers Union

Food & Water Watch

National Consumers League

STOP Foodborne Illness