

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

April 6, 2010

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman, House Education and Labor Committee
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), I am pleased to offer our support of H.R. 4812, the "*Local Jobs for America Act*."

Like other municipal public safety agencies, local health departments protect the public. They respond to natural disasters. They plan, train, and exercise to prepare for emergencies, including acts of bioterrorism. Local health departments detect and stop outbreaks of disease. They keep food safe to eat and water safe to drink.

The recession is compromising the continuing ability of local health departments to prevent illness, death, and disease. Budget cuts at the federal, state, and local levels have necessitated lay-offs, job losses through attrition, and furloughs that have resulted in reductions in essential public health services across the country.

In the last two years, local health departments have lost 23,000 jobs, or 15% of the local public health workforce. Without intervention, we anticipate that this trend will continue and likely worsen. The cumulative reductions in staff are seriously diminishing local health departments' capacities to fulfill their first-responder missions and to keep people safe and healthy in urban and rural communities in all regions of the country. The H1N1 influenza outbreak has highlighted the need for local health departments to sustain capacity for response to any emergency. These layoffs are also making it increasingly difficult to continue ongoing operations in areas such as food safety, response to regularly occurring outbreaks of preventable diseases, and reduction of chronic disease.

Federal funding is needed to restore local health department jobs. NACCHO appreciates the focus on supporting local governments in the *Local Jobs for America Act*. By directly allocating funds to municipalities, the *Local Jobs for America Act* would help address current local government budgetary shortfalls and, in turn, may enable local governments to provide local health departments with the resources necessary to reinstate laid-off personnel, return furloughed employees to full-time work, and restore core public health services.

NACCHO looks forward to working with you and your colleagues to advance legislation that delivers much needed resources to stem the tide of job losses in local health departments. If we can be of any assistance to you or your staff, please contact Donna Brown, NACCHO's Government Affairs Counsel.

Thank you for your attention to this important public health issue.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Pestronk
Executive Director

