



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Federal Agency Budget Cuts and Congressional Health Care Repeal Proposals Will Harm the Health of Northern Michigan

GAYLORD, Mich. – The Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA), made up of local health departments serving 25 counties and over 600,000 individuals, is troubled by the harms The American Health Care Act (AHCA) would make to the public health system and health insurance availability. NMPHA is also alarmed by talks to cut domestic agency budgets, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

NMPHA concurs with the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association and the AARP that the AHCA would weaken health insurance programs, including Medicaid and Medicare, result in fewer insured Americans and hurt vulnerable patient populations. In the 25 county NMPHA region, over 43,000 individuals are insured by Medicaid and over 29,000 individuals have insurance through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) health insurance marketplace. The AHCA puts the tens of thousands of northern Michiganders insured by the ACA at risk of losing their coverage by rolling back Medicaid expansion and decreasing subsidy amounts for insurance exchanges.

Further, the AHCA Act guts the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF), which makes up 12% of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's budget. Many of these dollars make their way to northern Michigan local health departments and communities. The dollars fund chronic disease prevention programs, such as diabetes prevention courses, which can have a 5 to 1 return on investment and bend the health care cost curve. Most recently, dollars from the PPHF provided 10 municipal governments and non-profits with funds to improve greenspaces, including parks and trails.

Stripping local health departments of PPHF resources would also limit or end programs that have served northern Michigan residents for decades, including the provision of immunizations, child lead poisoning prevention, and epidemiology and laboratory capacity. Lisa Peacock, Health Officer at the Health Department of Northwest Michigan said: "At a time when there are imminent public health threats facing the region – threats that don't stop at county, state or national borders such as the ongoing H7N9 avian influenza outbreak in China – now is not the time to defund public health."

Executive Branch proposals to slash the EPA budget by up to 30%, which includes a 97% cut in Great Lake Restoration Initiative funding, concerns Denise Bryan, Health Officer at District Health Department 2 and District Health Department 4. Citing her ongoing advocacy for identifying hazardous chemical plumes discharged from the Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Bryan said: "The idea of fewer resources for environmental testing, surveillance and mitigation is insulting to the residents of Iosco



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County who have had to rely on alternative water as a result of their well water being tainted by perfluorinated chemicals." Bryan added, "Moreover, the proposed cuts to the EPA would end beach water quality testing as we know it, which will negatively impact the health of northern Michigan residents and visitors."

Peacock concluded, "Health officials in northern Michigan are closely monitoring proposals to limit access to health care services, end important and lifesaving public health programs, and cut off resources to protect the Great Lakes and its surrounding environment. We take these proposals seriously and want to actively warn the 600,000 residents of our region of these threats as required of us under the Michigan Public Health Code."

The Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance is made up of six northern Michigan local health departments, spanning across 25 counties. The Alliance works across this region to increase public health capacity, maximize resources, reduce duplication and improve health status.



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