



February 21, 2003

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Via Facsimile (202) 225-3509

Dear Chairman Regula:

The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) respectfully requests an opportunity to testify at upcoming hearings of the United States House of Representatives' Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee concerning appropriations for Fiscal Year 2004. Of particular interest is funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) programs to:

- combat the rising epidemic of childhood and adult obesity and overweight
- expand effective programs to eliminate health disparities
- promote healthy lifestyles among children and youth.

SOPHE is a professional health education organization founded in 1950 to promote the health of all people by stimulating research on the theory and practice of health behavior; translating sound science into practice; and supporting high quality standards for professional preparation. SOPHE is the only professional organization devoted exclusively to public health education and health promotion. The Society's membership comprises more than 4,500 individuals working in health education and health promotion in schools, universities, health care organizations, corporations, voluntary health agencies, and federal, state and local government. There are currently 23 SOPHE chapters covering 32 states, including Ohio, and two chapters under development.

SOPHE gratefully acknowledges the strong bipartisan support that the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education has provided to the CDC in recent years. Yet, data indicate that public health needs in 2004 will be among the most serious yet. Chronic diseases are the nation's leading causes of morbidity and mortality and account for more than 70% of the nation's \$1 trillion spent on health care annually. Collectively, they account for 76% of all deaths in each of the states of Ohio, Illinois, Connecticut, Michigan, and Iowa; 78% in New York and Rhode Island; and 75% in Wisconsin. Thus, it is highly likely that 3 of 4 persons living in your district and those of many Labor HHS Subcommittee members will be develop a chronic condition requiring long-term and costly medical intervention. Moreover, chronic diseases account for the largest health gap among populations. African Americans have higher mortality rates for cardiovascular disease and stroke, and cancer of the lung, colon/rectum,

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breast, cervix, and prostate than Whites, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Hispanic Americans.

Programs that establish healthy behaviors in our youth represent an investment for the future health of this nation. Tobacco use, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, alcohol, and other drug use are risk behaviors, often established during youth, which contribute markedly to heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and injuries. School health programs have the potential to reach 53 million young people and are demonstrated to be cost-effective in promoting healthy behaviors. Yet 29 states, including Ohio do not have coordinated school health programs.

According to recent surveys by Research!America, the public supports increased funding for disease prevention and health promotion programs. With the increasing diversity of our population, there is no “one size fits all” strategy or approach that works with all population groups. Innovative programs are having a positive effect in infant mortality, cancer screening and management, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and immunization. As our health care system requires individuals to assume increased responsibility for their own health, health education and preventive health programs play an even more important role in preparing Americans for such responsibility. Science-based programs in health education that combine individual behavior change with community programs, policies and practices are effective, thereby saving lives and reducing U.S. health care expenditures.

At your invitation, we look forward to the opportunity to provide testimony on “what’s working” to address the nation’s health problems and to working with Congress and CDC on improving the health status of all adults and youth.

Sincerely,

Sue Lachenmayr, MPH, CHES
President

Elaine Auld, MPH, CHES
Executive Director