

LOGO SPREAD

December XX, 2017

The Honorable Eric Hargan
Acting Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Acting Secretary Hargan:

Our organizations were deeply concerned to read the report in the *Washington Post* on Friday, December 15, 2017, that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) budget analysts were informed they are discouraged from using seven words – including “vulnerable,” “entitlement,” “diversity,” “transgender,” “fetus,” “evidence-based” and “science-based” – as they prepare the President’s Fiscal Year 2019 budget. As the nation’s premier public health agency, the CDC cannot carry out its mission of improving the health and safety of all Americans when its staff are urged to avoid using basic phrases that are so intrinsic to public health.

CDC serves as the command center for the nation’s public health defense system against emerging and reemerging infectious diseases. From aiding in the surveillance, detection and prevention of the Zika virus to playing a lead role in the control of Ebola in West Africa and detecting and responding to cases in the U.S., to monitoring and investigating disease outbreaks to pandemic flu preparedness, to addressing chronic diseases. CDC is the nation’s – and the world’s – expert resource and response center, coordinating communications and action and serving as the laboratory reference center. States, communities and the international community rely on CDC for accurate information and direction in a crisis or outbreak. In the United States, CDC serves as a leader in the federal-state-local public health enterprise, which encompasses state, territorial and local health agencies that protect the public every day. None of this can occur unless CDC is able to convey who is at risk, what the risk is and how the science dictates the risk be addressed using established language – including the seven words as appropriate.

Science is the bedrock of sound public health and medical decision-making – and it should not be subject to partisan politics. HHS – including CDC – will not be successful in improving the health of Americans affected by these conditions if there is political interference – real or perceived – whether it be aimed at language or at undermining key scientific principles and policies. Our organizations urge the Department of Health and Human Services to assure the Department’s public health professionals and the public that science – and descriptions of it – remain at the heart of its mission. We look forward to your response clarifying these troubling reports.

Sincerely,

[LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS]

Cc: The Honorable Brenda Fitzgerald, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention