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September 17, 2010

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The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin and Senator Cochran:

On behalf of the American Lung Association, I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed chronic disease block grant in the fiscal year 2011 (FY11) Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriation bill. This proposed block grant includes the school health program which funds the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH).

We are particularly concerned that due to the block grant, DASH funding in FY11 will not be level with previous years. DASH partners with national organizations, including the American Lung Association, as well as state entities to implement public initiatives including school health programs in asthma. Many schools use the Asthma Friendly Schools Initiative, which was created through a cooperative agreement between CDC and the Lung Association. Through support from DASH, many schools nationwide have reduced the risk of asthma-related emergencies by using the Asthma Friendly Schools Initiative to educate students and staff about asthma, reducing asthma triggers in the classroom, and creating long-term asthma management plans. Providing states with a block grant, instead of allowing CDC to administer the funds, could exclude valuable, directly-funded programs from being continued.

Block grants have the potential to reduce important program funding because they allow grant recipients to let their guard down against some diseases. For example, in the early 1980s tuberculosis (TB) funding began to be administered through block grants. Rates of TB infection had been declining in the United States and states *reduced* the amount of money they allocated to TB programs from the larger block grants. With less funding, TB programs were forced to limit the services they provided and dismantle the infrastructure they had established. As a result, rates of TB infection in the United States increased and patients experienced more dangerous strains of the disease such as multi-drug

resistant TB and extremely-drug resistant TB. Ultimately, the cost to reverse the resurgence of TB was much more expensive than it would have been to maintain the TB control infrastructure.

Asthma is the most common chronic disease among children and the number one reason that children miss days of school. DASH is an important component of the school health program. Please continue to fund the school health program as a single line item, rather than as part of a larger block grant. Thank you for your attention to this manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Connor".

Charles D. Connor
President and CEO