



February 28, 2012

Dear Senator/Representative:

We are writing today to urge your strong support for the National Asthma Control Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). **Specifically, we ask that in your appropriations request for fiscal year 2013 that funding for CDC's National Asthma Control Program be maintained at a funding level of at least \$25.3 million and that the National Asthma Control Program remain as a distinct, stand-alone program.**

Our organizations are very concerned with the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2013, which proposes to eliminate the National Asthma Control Program by combining it with the Healthy Homes/Lead Poisoning Prevention Program – and creating a new program called “Healthy Homes and Community Environments.” This would have a devastating effect on the more than 25 million Americans who have asthma.

Last year, the Congress sent a clear, bipartisan message to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention when the omnibus conferees instructed CDC to “continue its support of the National Asthma Control Program as currently structured.” Unfortunately, the President's Budget proposal again recommends elimination of this vital program.

Asthma remains a significant public health problem in the United States and one that cannot be ignored. It is estimated that more than 25 million Americans currently have asthma, of whom 7 million are children. Asthma is the third leading cause of hospitalization among children under the age of 15 and is a leading cause of school absences from chronic disease – accounting for over 10.5 million lost school days in 2008. Asthma costs our healthcare system over \$50.1 billion annually and indirect costs from lost productivity add another \$5.9 billion, for a total of \$56 billion dollars annually. Asthma claims the lives of almost 3,500 Americans each year, or approximately nine people per day.

Since its inception in 1999, the National Asthma Control Program has worked to integrate and coordinate the public health response to asthma control. Prior to the creation of the National Asthma Control Program by Congress in 1999, there was a lack of surveillance, or data collection, about asthma. Now, there are national and state-specific surveillance systems in place, which allow officials to track and better understand asthma trends – ultimately allowing decision-makers to focus resources on strategies that work and populations that are most in need. There is also much better awareness and management of asthma in schools across the country, which is critical to keeping children safe in the place besides home where they spend most of their time. And, since 1999, mortality and hospitalizations due to asthma have decreased even though asthma prevalence has risen, which likely

indicates a better level of disease management. However, it also means more people than ever will need assistance in understanding and controlling their disease.

The President's Budget request proposes to reduce the number of states funded by the National Asthma Control Program from 36 to fewer than 15. This would drastically reduce states' capacity to implement a proven public health response to this disease as well as dramatically reduce surveillance measures that track progress in reducing asthma attacks. It would also significantly set back the progress in managing the disease that has been made these past 13 years.

Asthma is a complex, multifactorial disease that requires a comprehensive approach. Public health programs that reduce the burden of asthma must include surveillance, environmental measures to reduce exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollutants, awareness and self-management education, and appropriate healthcare services. While our organizations recognize these difficult financial times, we also know that when it comes to asthma management, an investment made today will save money tomorrow. A study that appeared in the *American Journal of Respiratory Critical Care* found that for every dollar invested in asthma interventions, there was a \$35 benefit in healthcare cost savings and workdays lost.

We again ask for your leadership in ensuring that CDC's National Asthma Control Program remain a distinct program by including in **your appropriations request for fiscal year 2013 that funding for CDC's National Asthma Control Program be maintained at a funding level of at least \$25.3 million and that the National Asthma Control Program remain as a stand-alone program.**

We look forward to working with you to reduce the burden in U.S. caused by asthma.

Sincerely,

American Lung Association
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Thoracic Society
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
National Association of State Boards of Education
Regional Asthma Management and Prevention