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August 29, 2011

Dear Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction Member:

As you and your colleagues on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction begin your deliberations, the American Lung Association writes to urge you to prioritize and protect investments in public health and to produce a final bill that is free from any policy riders.

The American Lung Association is the oldest national voluntary health organization and the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. The American Lung Association wishes to call particular attention to the importance of maintaining lifesaving investments in the budgets of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

- CDC is at the heart of our nation's efforts to prevent and reduce diseases such as asthma and those caused by tobacco use. Preventing and reducing chronic diseases will result in greater American productivity and fewer healthcare costs.
- EPA plays a critical role in protecting the public health from life-threatening air pollution that can cause asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes, cancer and shorten lives.
- NIH works to find cures and treatments for diseases such as lung cancer, emphysema and asthma.
- In addition, the American Lung Association calls on the committee to preserve and maintain the levels of funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund as defined in the Affordable Care Act. The Fund was created to be a dedicated investment in addition to current appropriations to prevention and public health in order to reduce medical costs and improve the health of all Americans.

Reduction in funding for these critical public health agencies and to the Prevention and Public Health Fund will lead to greater healthcare costs and burdens on the Medicaid and Medicare system – driving up spending instead of reducing it.

Finally, legislation that is as important and as far-reaching as what will be produced by this committee must not include policy riders that prevent agencies from taking the steps they are required to do to protect public health. The American Lung Association calls upon the Joint Committee to reject the inclusion of any policy riders from its final product.

Continuing investments in public health today will save lives and healthcare dollars both now and in the future. The Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction must protect the public health by maintaining funding for these critical health agencies and by not including any policy riders that would hamper federal agencies from carrying out their responsibilities to protect the public health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Connor".

Charles D. Connor
President and CEO

Cc: Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
The Honorable John Boehner
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Eric Cantor
The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Richard Durbin