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Senator Patty Murray, WA,

environmental health professionals in much of this country. Rural and frontier health departments often only have environmental health practitioners operating their public health departments.

Environmental health is the key to providing local public health services.

There are specific sections of the PREVENT Pandemics Act that could be improved by including and strengthening environmental health provisions. The act must:

Sec. 102. Appointment and authority of the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Include acknowledgement of environmental health as part of the specific functions of the director.

Require that the CDC agency-wide strategic plan to include the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) and recognize its role in achieving the goals of this act.

Sec. 103. Public health and medical preparedness and response coordination.

Specifically request the Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response (ASPR) to address environmental health concerns when clarifying ASPR's role and responsibilities.

Require

Sec. 214. Epidemic forecasting and outbreak analytics.

Recognize during the development of forecasting models for public health emergencies and infectious disease outbreaks by the CDC director that environmental health is a key component, especially with vector borne outbreak and natural disaster responsibilities falling under many STLT environmental health programs.

Sec. 221 Improving recruitment and retention of the frontline public health workforce.

Ensure that the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program includes environmental health professionals.

Require GAO in its evaluation of the public health workforce to include the contributions the environmental health workforce provided during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sec. 222. Awards to support community health workers and community health.

Allow funds used by STLT agencies to recruit, hire, and train community health workers to include the environmental health workforce. Furthermore, support of education and training in communities must include the environmental health workforce.

Sec. 402. Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) equipment maintenance.

Ensure that the SNS includes items necessary for the environmental health workforce.

Sec. 404. Improving transparency and predictability of processes of the Strategic National Stockpile

Require that the secretary of HHS includes environmental public health officials at the annual meetings to share information about the maintenance and use of the SNS.

Sec. 409. Provision of medical countermeasures to Indian programs and facilities

Ensure that tribal environmental health programs are included in the deployment of medical products during a public health emergency.

Both present and future public health departments will need environmental health practitioners to perform environmental health services. Without acknowledging the second largest segment of the public health workforce, as well as the services they provide means that STLT health departments will never achieve the goals sought by this effort. Environmental health is critical to ensuring a strong public health workforce both now and in the future.

By disregarding the environmental health workforce, the efforts of the PREVENT Pandemics Act to support the development of the next generation of public health leaders will neglect a critical part of the workforce responsible for environmental public health.

As the U.S. Senate seeks to work with leaders from across the public health community, NEHA recommends that this work includes leaders from the environmental public health community. Being part of this effort will acknowledge the value provided by the environmental health workforce, while ensuring that this effort achieves the maximum success for the STLT public health workforce.

NEHA supports PREVENT Pandemics Act and wants to see it succeed yet has doubts of its success if the second largest sector of the public health workforce is not included.

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