

Secretary Xavier Becerra
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Oct 13, 2022

Dear Secretary Becerra,

As you set priorities for the Department of Health and Human Services to enhance the health and well-being of all Americans, the undersigned organizations ask you to implement the recommendations regarding physical activity from the [Biden-Harris National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#) to ensure all states have the capacity to improve access to physical activity for their populations. The National Strategy sets out actionable steps to improve the health and wellness of our communities through investments in active transportation and access to green space and makes it easier for people to be physically active as part of everyday life. We urge you to support the National Strategy by including \$130 million in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO) in your fiscal year 2024 budget request. This funding would enable the expansion of the CDC's State Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Program to support all 50 states and the territories. Additionally, we request that you encourage the CDC to continue funding its Active People, Healthy Nation initiative, which provides necessary technical assistance to recipients of DNPAO funding and builds national partner investment in DNPAO-aligned strategies. With this increased investment in SPAN, the health and physical activity communities can implement a key recommendation from the National Strategy's physical activity pillar: *Build places for physical activity*. Our organizations are committed to turning the tide on physical inactivity across the population and working with you to implement the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.

Regular physical activity is both health-promoting and important for treatment and prevention of diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer. These diseases are the leading causes of death in the U.S. Attaining the recommended level of physical activity confers numerous other benefits, including reducing the burden of musculoskeletal disabilities. Unfortunately, youth physical activity decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic and inactivity among adults is now alarmingly high (25.3 percent). Despite these dire statistics, there is reason to be optimistic: the health and physical activity communities know how to address physical inactivity, and it is through creating opportunities for physical activity as part of everyday life as identified in the National Strategy.

First, the National Strategy calls for investment to **“expand HHS CDC’s State Physical Activity and Nutrition Program (SPAN) to all states and territories to implement successful state and community-level policies and activities for physical activity”**. The SPAN program is administered by DNPAO, which only receives enough funding to administer SPAN in 16 states, yet physical activity and nutrition strategies are needed in all 50 states and territories. SPAN programs have been effective at shaping state and community environments to support everyday physical activity for residents. For example, Missouri’s SPAN program assisted seven communities in

southwestern Missouri to develop Complete Streets policies, and a “shared street network,” which provide new opportunities for safe physical activity for over 11,000 residents.

Second, the strategy calls on the administration to **“promote active transportation and land use policies to support physical activity”** through implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). By encouraging the CDC to continue its support of its **Active People Healthy Nation (APHN) initiative, which builds national partner investment and provides technical assistance to communities to access BIL funding for active transportation, as well as to develop the Complete Streets policies and Safe Routes to School programs as recommended in the National Strategy.** Active People, Healthy Nation is a national initiative to help 27 million Americans become more physically active by 2027 by creating more places for people of all ages and abilities to be physically active. In some communities, particularly low income and underserved communities, residents have longer term and stronger relationships to health agencies than transportation agencies. Therefore, technical assistance through Active People Healthy Nation may help those communities bridge the gap necessary to access transportation funding. Active People, Healthy Nation funding has demonstrated success helping rural and low-income communities access funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. With technical assistance provided through Active People, Healthy Nation, 12 rural high obesity counties (parishes) in Louisiana are applying for funding to build safe and accessible bicycling and walking infrastructure made available in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The physical activity community recognizes the unique opportunity to build on the demonstrated successes of the SPAN program and bring the benefit of that investment to bear in all 50 states and territories. This opportunity also maximizes the generational investment in infrastructure to promote everyday physical activity. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our request to fully fund DNPAO to expand the SPAN program to all 50 states and territories and set aside funding for CDC’s Active People, Healthy Nation initiative. If you have any questions, please contact John Laughner, American Heart Association at john.laughner@heart.org.

Signed,