



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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John R. Kasich / Governor

Theodore E. Wymyslo, M.D. / Director of Health

MAY 22 2013

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

As the lead public health agency in our state, the Ohio Department of Health receives nearly 70 percent of its funding from federal agencies to provide essential public health services to 11.5 million Ohioans. Since early March, Ohio's state and local agencies have been waiting to learn exactly what the sequestration budget cuts and program impacts can be expected from each of their respective federal funders. Timely receipt of this information is vital for us to appropriately adjust services at the state and local level to coincide with a reduced level of funding. To date we have received final sequestration budget cut information on only a small fraction of the nearly 100 federal grants administered by our department and our local partners.

Unfortunately, we cannot move forward with our budget adjustments without more specific details from our funders in the way of final Notices of Award (NOA) for existing grants. We are becoming increasingly concerned with our ability to quickly shift our service delivery models within the ever-shrinking timelines that exist to implement these cuts, especially for the October 1, 2012 grant start dates. In many cases, state and local agencies will be forced to adjust staffing levels, which requires a window of several months in order to fully comply with federal labor laws, civil service regulations, and our collective bargaining unit agreements.

While we appreciate receiving information from our federal partners that speaks to projected cuts, we cannot implement these federal reductions in the public health workforce or change the level of provided services until final NOAs have been received for each impacted program. As you can imagine, we have an urgent need for definitive information on the sequestration budget cuts to be imposed in Ohio.

We respectfully request that an accelerated effort be made to provide Ohio-specific funding information (in the form of NOAs) to allow us a fair opportunity to plan program changes accordingly. Our ultimate goal is to lessen the negative impact these federal reductions will have on services to Ohioans.

If you need clarification, my staff and I are available to further discuss this vitally important matter in more detail.

Sincerely

Theodore E. Wymyslo, MD
Director, Ohio Department of Health

cc: John R. Kasich, Governor
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Health Resources and Services Administration
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
National Association of County and City Health Officials
Association of Ohio Health Commissioners
Ohio Public Health Association