



January 6, 2022

**TO:** Hon. Xavier Becerra, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)  
Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

**CC:** Dr. Micky Tripathi, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC), HHS  
Susan Rice, Director, Domestic Policy Council, White House

**FROM:** The National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health

**SUBJECT:** Guidance to States on Federal Funding to Modernize Governmental Public Health

The National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH) writes to urge the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to issue guidance to states outlining a strategy for how governmental public health entities should modernize their public health data systems in light of lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, NASDOH requests a meeting with staff at the HHS Office of the Secretary (OS), CDC, and ONC to discuss the administration's plans to offer support and guidance to states and counties about how to most effectively use the federal funding that is already flowing to them for these purposes.

As NASDOH wrote in our recent [Advisory to States: Leveraging Fiscal Relief, Public Health and Social Care Funding to Advance Data Modernization and Interoperability](#), we are particularly interested in encouraging states to prioritize the use of flexible funding sources to strengthen public health and social care data systems, and enable the collection, management, and storage of information on individual and community level social needs data. This data is valuable to design and evaluate more effective public health and social care programs and interventions that effectively address social needs and SDOH.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, governmental public health had been chronically underfunded. COVID-19 shed light on the underprepared and underfunded public health infrastructure in communities across the country. Fortunately, through pandemic-related fiscal relief funding flowing to states, such as the CARES Act, American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), and proposed Build Back Better Act, there are new, emerging, and much needed resources flowing to states and communities to shore up and strengthen our public health infrastructure. With that great opportunity to make long-term investments comes an imperative to ensure the funds are being used wisely to modernize governmental public health data systems, targeted at communities' greatest needs, and flowing towards the development of sustainable systems that will allow communities to be healthier, more resilient, and better prepared for future pandemics.

NASDOH's members span the health care, public health and social services sectors and have experienced firsthand the challenge communities face in a pandemic with public health systems that are underfunded and incapable of effectively conducting core public health functions. With the funding currently flowing to states and counties, there is opportunity for the federal government to play a role in providing practical guidance for states and localities to make the best use of major federal investments to build and strengthen public health data systems in the long run. Offering this guidance now would allow states to

better develop and implement strategies to modernize that could be sustained in the long run, ensuring that we have stronger public health systems capable of addressing people's social needs and social determinants of health (SDOH) in pandemic and non-pandemic times.

We appreciate your attention on developing guidance to assist states in modernizing governmental public health data systems and we look forward to discussing with you further. For more information on NASDOH and our members, please visit our website at [www.nasdoh.org](http://www.nasdoh.org) or contact Sara Singleton at [Sara.Singleton@leavittpartners.com](mailto:Sara.Singleton@leavittpartners.com)

Sincerely,

*Sara Singleton*

Sara Singleton  
Principal, Leavitt Partners and Advisor to NASDOH