

February 19, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chair
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Patty Murray, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The undersigned national, state and local organizations understand the critical impact that transportation and the built environment have on the health of Americans. We respectfully request that you allocate \$3 million for FY2017 to the National Center for Environmental Health's Built Environment and Health Initiative (BEHI).

The choices we make about land use, transportation options and the built environment affect levels of physical activity, air quality and traffic pollution, traffic crashes, access to health care and healthy foods, community violence and much more. Good built environment choices can enable our residents to be healthier and save billions in averted health care costs for asthma, obesity, traffic injuries and more.

While there are many linkages between health and transportation, often federal, state and local departments of transportation and health operate independently, resulting in decision-making about transportation that does not consider the health impacts on people. BEHI has been a leader in changing this pattern—significantly advancing the practice of performing health impact assessments (HIAs) of transportation projects by providing technical assistance and support for public health officials and producing an innovative Transportation and Health Tool that will allow transportation decision-makers to benchmark their progress in creating healthy transportation options. Several of the HIAs that BEHI supported have won awards while also improving the health of residents, including ones in rural Curry County, Oregon and urban Nashville, Tennessee.

Within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and across other government agencies, BEHI staff provide expert assistance, research and consultation about the best program and policy approaches to create healthier built environments. They have also supported the work of organizations that educate practitioners about environmental health, community design and active transportation. With the recent passage of a new five-year transportation bill and the Surgeon General's focus on walking to improve health, the expertise of BEHI is more in demand than ever.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our request to provide \$3 million in FY2017 to the great work of BEHI. This small investment is critical to help public health officials, organizations and local communities make informed decisions about the built environment to best address the health of their residents. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request, and would be happy to discuss further with you.

Sincerely,