



March 19, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: LIFT America Act Hearing

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians, which represents more than 136,700 family physicians and medical students across the United States, we write to support the following provisions in the Leading Infrastructure for Tomorrow's (LIFT) America Act (H.R. 1848), which strengthens public health infrastructure and expands access to health care. Just as our nation's infrastructure such as roads and bridges need rehabilitation, similar investments are needed in our health care system to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sec. 40001 – 02: Core Public Health Infrastructure

The AAFP supports the funding for modernization efforts to build workforce capacity, expand laboratory systems, and improve health information systems at the local, state, and federal level. As outlined in the AAFP's [position paper](#), family physicians play an integral role in achieving public health goals. Primary care activities, such as clinical preventive services, early diagnosis and intervention, quality-driven and evidence-based care, health promotion, and health advocacy, reinforce public health activities. Likewise, public health activities, such as population surveillance, disease control, health promotion and interventions based on determinants of health, injury prevention, and policy formation facilitate primary care's ability to function within the health care system.

Sec. 40004: Pilot Program to Improve Laboratory Infrastructure

The AAFP is pleased with the funding for lab infrastructure, which aligns with AAFP's [advocacy](#) efforts to expand COVID-19 testing. Currently, there are three COVID-19 tests that can be performed at a patient's usual point of care, following [CDC recommendations](#), as well as numerous non-COVID diagnostics. Family physicians are well suited to provide these services, and we look forward to family physicians receiving important investments for their lab and testing capacities. In addition to these investments, it is critical to ensure laboratory procedures performed in a physician's office receive [adequate payment](#).

Sec. 40005: 21st Century Indian Health Program Hospitals and Outpatient Health Care Facilities

The AAFP appreciates the investments in health care infrastructure for American Indians and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN). These populations often face significant cultural, language, geographic, and income barriers to accessing care, and experience higher rates of risk factors like obesity, substance use, diabetes, liver disease, and hepatitis.¹ The AAFP is [committed](#) to reducing health disparities and is pleased to see dedicated funding for the Indian Health Service included in this bill.

STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

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Sec. 40006: Pilot Program to Improve Community Based Care Infrastructure

AAFP strongly supports the \$500 million for Teaching Health Centers (THC) and behavioral health care centers to facilitate renovation and modernization, which are especially necessary to respond to increased costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to expand physical access to primary care training. The AAFP in conjunction with the THC Coalition recently [wrote](#) to the committee stressing the need for THC modernization.

Sec. 40007: Community Health Center Capital Project Funding

The AAFP is supportive of the \$10 billion allocation for community health centers (CHCs) and is pleased that this committee recognizes the importance of CHCs. CHCs are critical to ensuring all patients can access preventative services and avoid costlier ER visits. Primary care physicians make up nearly 90 percent of physicians working in CHCs, and the majority of those physicians are family physicians. As such, the AAFP has [advocated](#) for adequate funding for CHCs so they can mitigate inequities and increase access to affordable health care.

Sec. 10001 – 15001: Broadband Infrastructure

The AAFP is pleased that this legislation expands broadband nationally. At the end of 2019, over 14.5 million Americans lacked access to broadband at the recommended speed of 25/3 Mbps.ⁱⁱ The ongoing pandemic has highlighted the utility and importance of broadband for access to preventative health services, mental and behavioral health care, education, job and housing resources, and public health information. Without broadband, many Tribal, rural, and urban areas lack critical resources like telehealth, and physicians face greater difficulty serving these communities and tracking important quality and outcome measures. Moreover, as stated in the AAFP's [telehealth priorities](#), equitable access to broadband is critical to reducing health disparities and many social determinants of health like education, safe housing, and employment.

Additional Titles Addressing Social Determinants of Health

This legislation makes critical investments in areas that will address Social Determinants of Health (SDOHs) in the United States. Funding to upgrade drinking water infrastructure will help ensure all communities have access to safe drinking water. Elevated blood lead levels, often from aging building and water infrastructure, is known to cause attention and behavior issues in young children and can lead to long term learning impairment.ⁱⁱⁱ Without access to clean drinking water, many communities will face ongoing health challenges and poor health outcomes. The additional investments in the Brownfield redevelopment program will help clean up the more than 450,000 contaminated properties across the nation and ensure healthier communities. And finally, investments in hospital infrastructure will help expand access to care, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas. The AAFP is [committed](#) to working with Congress to advance policies that address SDOHs to reduce health inequities.

The AAFP commends the committee's actions to invest in the country's public health infrastructure. Should you have any questions, please contact John Aguilar, Manager of Legislative Affairs at jaquilar@aafp.org.

Sincerely,



Gary L. LeRoy, MD, FAFPP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians

ⁱ American Indian/Alaska Native - The Office of Minority Health. (n.d.). Retrieved March 18, 2021, from <https://www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=62>

ⁱⁱ FCC Annual Broadband Deployment Report Shows Digital Divide Is Rapidly Closing. FCC. Pub. January 19, 2021. <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-369393A1.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Mayans, L. (2019, July 01). Lead poisoning in children. Retrieved March 18, 2021, from <https://www.aafp.org/afp/2019/0701/p24.html>