

Joint Statement on Support for Public Health Workers

June 17, 2020

Over the last several months, we have recognized the tremendous role our front line health care workers have played in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. These doctors, nurses, first responders, and many other health professionals are heroes, deserving every bit of gratitude we can offer them.

Another group of health professionals are also heroes, their work often hidden from public view. Public health workers – physicians, nurses, public health officials, epidemiologists, and many others – are working tirelessly to protect communities and save lives, often navigating difficult political and public expectations to make recommendations that must balance rapidly changing science and wide-ranging health and economic impacts.

Some of these recommendations have been difficult for our citizens, including the closure of and modifications needed for businesses, schools, and child care. Sadly, this has resulted in threats and violence directed toward the public health officials making these recommendations. This damages civil society and threatens the democratic process. Despite the frustration caused by these important, life-saving decisions, violence has no place in responding to the COVID-19 threat.

We call upon elected officials at every level to support their public health officials; to condemn intimidation and threats of violence; and to provide resources to help mitigate the financial and psychological harms to individual citizens from policies needed to save lives. We must work in partnership if we are going to protect the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities across the country.

The American College of Preventive Medicine, American Association of Public Health Physicians, and American Public Health Association stand with our colleagues and elected leaders across the country who are working tirelessly to contain the pandemic.