Testimony in Support of Fiscal Year 2020 Funding for the National Center for Health Statistics

Prepared for the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate

Submitted by Julia Milton, Director of Public Affairs, Consortium of Social Science Associations; Chair, Friends of the National Center for Health Statistics

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As Chair of the Friends of the National Center for Health Statistics (Friends of NCHS), I am pleased to offer this written testimony for inclusion in the official committee record. **We urge the Subcommittee to appropriate $175 million in fiscal year (FY) 2020 for the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).**

The Friends of NCHS is a coalition representing over 60 scientific, public health, and research organizations, all of whom rely on the information produced by the National Center for Health Statistics. We greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's longstanding support of NCHS and the data it produces on all aspects of our health care system, including opioid and prescription drug use, maternal and infant mortality, chronic disease prevalence, health care disparities, emergency room use, health insurance coverage, teen pregnancy, and causes of death.

As a result of the rising costs of conducting surveys and years of flat or near-flat funding, NCHS has had to focus nearly all of its resources on continuing to produce the high-quality data that communities across the country depend on to understand their health. However, NCHS is also facing an increasingly urgent need to respond to rising costs, declining response rates, and an ever-more complex health care system. This can only be achieved through investing in much-needed innovation and modernization that would allow it to produce better information more quickly and efficiently, while reducing the reporting burden on local data providers. With additional funding, NCHS could capitalize on opportunities surrounding advances in statistical methodology, big data, and computing by:

- Linking data reporting systems and better integrating electronic health records into NCHS' data production, allowing it to receive and process information more efficiently, reduce burden on data providers, and analyze and release statistics faster;
- Researching how to conduct its most complex surveys more efficiently, making surveys less costly to taxpayers and less burdensome on participants; and

- Integrating machine learning into its analysis to spot trends in Americans' health earlier.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the Friends of NCHS. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.

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