

December 16, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney  
Director, White House Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

Like most Americans, the deans and program directors of the schools and programs of public health were outraged when we read in the December 16 issue of the *Washington Post* that budget analysts for the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention were told that fiscal year 2019 budget documents, apparently including the CDC's Congressional Justification, must be stripped of seven words and phrases that were viewed – somehow – as objectionable.

According to the article, which quoted CDC staff who were present for the vocabulary dressing down, the offending words include: “vulnerable,” “entitlement,” “diversity,” “transgender,” “fetus,” “evidence-based” and “science-based.” The paper was unable to ascertain whether the offending words and phrases were viewed as objectionable by officials of the Department of Health and Human Services, the White House Office of Management and Budget, or by others in the Executive Branch. The *Post* speculated that this may be a government-wide order. If this report is verified, it is an Orwellian attack on scientific integrity.

If the report in the *Post* is accurate, we ask that you immediately and publicly withdraw this censorship order regardless of where or how it originated. Further, we ask you to explain to the American people what steps you are taking to ensure that such censorship will not occur in the future.

We are particularly incensed that this act of censorship first came to light at the CDC. The CDC is our nation's leading public health agency, tasked with the critical mission of protecting the nation from “health, safety, and security threats.” On its website, the CDC promises in a “Pledge to the American People” to “base all public health decisions on the highest quality scientific data that is derived openly and objectively” and to “treat all persons with dignity, honesty, and respect.”

The reported policy flatly contravenes the mission of the agency, grossly violates the agency's pledge to the American people, and represents an appalling act of censorship. Leaving this policy in place would disrupt the agency's critical work and, as a result, threaten the health of U.S. communities across the country.

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney  
December 16, 2017  
Page Two

We are asking the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to investigate this apparent censorship effort, since it directly relates to the information provided to them by Federal agencies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Magaña", written in a cursive style. The signature is enclosed within a simple, hand-drawn rectangular box.

Laura Magaña, PhD, MS  
President and CEO

Cc: Eric Hargan, Acting Secretary, HHS  
Brenda Fitzgerald, Director, CDC

December 16, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Pat Leahy  
Ranking Democrat  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room S-146A, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Room H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Democrat  
House Appropriations Committee  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Cochran and Leahy and Representatives Frelinghuysen and Lowey:

The deans and program directors of the schools and programs of public health were outraged when we read in the December 16 issue of the *Washington Post* that budget analysts for the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention were told that fiscal year 2019 budget documents, apparently including the CDC's Congressional Justification, must be stripped of seven words and phrases that were viewed – somehow – as objectionable.

We respectfully ask that you and your colleagues on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees investigate this apparent censorship effort, since it directly relates to the information provided to them by Federal agencies. Further, we hope you will take appropriate action to ensure that such efforts are not attempted in the future by the current or any other Administration.

We sent OMB Director Mulvaney the attached letter of protest earlier today.

Such censorship efforts revealed by the *Washington Post* are outrageous, don't serve the interests of the American people, and inhibit the mission and employees of Federal agencies.

Sincerely,



Laura Magaña, PhD, MS  
President and CEO  
December 17, 2017

Attachment