

2024 APHA Action Board Report to Governing Council

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Action Board Chairperson

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Overview

The APHA Action Board works closely with APHA Governmental Relations staff to provide robust advocacy on behalf of critical public health issues and advance the association's legislative priorities. These actions come in the form of Action Board member discussions with legislators and legislative staff, voicing issues of public health concern at legislative town halls, and promoting the sending of action alerts by the Board's members and represented units. The Action Board supports and encourages advocacy work by member units within APHA, including APHA Sections and Affiliates. During their 3-year terms of service, Action Board members connect with and engage their assigned member units to advocate for APHA's priority issues during special advocacy events and throughout the year. In addition to their other Action Board responsibilities, the Chair, Chair-Designate, and two members also serve on the APHA Joint Policy Committee; the Chair also serves on the APHA Executive Board.

Action Board Highlights

The APHA Action Board coordinated its work through quarterly meetings, a mid-year meeting and an annual meeting. Meetings included discussion of legislative updates and discussion of strategy for ongoing and special advocacy campaigns. Governmental Relations staff provided reports during each meeting, and the Action Board Chairperson reported on the work of the APHA Joint Policy Committee and Executive Board.

The Chair-Designate engaged the full Action Board in planning the board-sponsored advocacy session that will take place during the APHA Annual Meeting in Minneapolis. This session will showcase examples of successful advocacy initiatives led by APHA members from across the country.

Throughout the year, each Action Board member implemented a two-pronged approach to advance advocacy regarding APHA legislative priorities. Through regular contacts with their assigned member units, Action Board members disseminated and encouraged the use of APHA advocacy tools and resources by APHA members. Sending action alerts and sharing state fact sheet information with colleagues were recommended as immediate forms of advocacy, with attendance at town halls and tapping into advocacy opportunities described on APHA special event web pages also brought to the attention of member units. In addition to this ongoing work to promote advocacy by APHA members, each Action Board member individually engaged with their elected members of congress to discuss APHA legislative priorities during National Public Health Week in April and during the Speak for Health Campaign in August. Example member activities from this year included meeting with a Senate Legislative Aide in Washington

following the APHA Policy Action Institute to discuss the importance of maintaining CDC and HRSA funding; speaking with a California field representative about nutrition and the Farm bill; and raising the issues posed by the Protecting Health Care for All Patients Act during a House member led conservative, rural area town hall.

Advocacy Outcomes

Through the collaborative efforts of the Action Board and APHA Governmental Relations staff over the past year, 1,940 advocates sent a total of 2,770 messages to members of Congress. These messages included a total of nine different action alerts published by the Governmental Relations staff, with the most popular among advocates being the alerts on public health funding, nutrition priorities and climate change. During the August Speak for Health campaign, weekly promotion of action alerts and advocacy tools resulted in over 200 messages sent to Congress, plus additional advocacy actions reported by members including emails sent to legislators, meetings set up to discuss APHA priorities with elected officials, and social media posts.

Continued Improvement Plans

Moving into 2025, the Action Board will continue its work with an almost-complete roster of members while we await the selection of a Student Assembly representative. 11 of the 16 members will continue their three-year term and five new members were recently approved and will begin their work with the board after the Annual Meeting. Once a Student Assembly representative is submitted and approved, the board will continue with a full roster.

While member-driven advocacy has been a critical part of APHA's overall advocacy effort, there is a need to prepare and support even more members in direct advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels. In the coming year, Action Board members will explore and implement new strategies to increase involvement in public health advocacy among APHA members to build additional momentum for a comprehensive policy agenda to achieve health equity.