

## **Position Statement: Upholding Public Health Principles**

**April 2025**

The Association of Community Health Nursing Educators (ACHNE) represents academic and practice leaders committed to advancing public health nursing through education, research, and policy.

Over the past three months, the sustained issuance of executive orders and mass dismissals at the federal level have undermined public health infrastructure, disrupted essential services, and contradicted evidence-based principles central to health promotion, disease prevention, and community well-being.

ACHNE strongly condemns policies and actions that erode public health systems, politicize science, and destabilize the public health workforce. We remain committed to the ethical and evidence-informed practice of public health nursing to strengthen the health and well-being of our families, neighborhoods, and communities. We call for the protection and strengthening of the public health system in the United States.

The consequences of recent policy actions in the United States are far-reaching and deeply concerning:

### **Erosion of Trust in Public Institutions**

Executive orders that suppress scientific data, undermine public health authority, or interfere with health communication further erode public trust and hinder effective response to health emergencies.

### **Destabilization of the Public Health Workforce**

The mass dismissal of experienced public health leaders results in an irreplaceable loss of institutional knowledge, disrupts continuity of care, and weakens the ability to respond to health crises such as disease outbreaks, climate-related disasters, and chronic disease prevention. The loss of public health leadership and capacity not only compromises domestic public health efforts but also diminishes the credibility and effectiveness of the United States as a global leader in health and emergency response.

### **Deep Advocacy Setbacks for Vulnerable Populations**

Marginalized and historically underserved populations bear the brunt of these policy decisions. The rollback of inclusive health policies and community-based programs jeopardizes progress toward health equity, especially for older adults, immigrants, communities of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those experiencing homelessness or food insecurity.

### **Disruption of Research and Evidence-Based Programs**

Executive orders that eliminate or defund research endeavors or evidence-based programs promoting environmental health, reproductive health, mental health, and

substance use prevention threaten decades of progress and contribute to worsening population health indicators.

### **Chilling Effect on Public Health Advocacy and Communication**

The targeting and dismissal of health professionals for speaking out against misinformation or advocating for community needs create a hostile environment for ethical public service, discourage civic engagement, and compromise freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and academic freedom.

### **Call to Action**

ACHNE calls on elected officials, health systems, academic institutions, and professional organizations to join forces in collaboration to:

- Protect and reinvest in the public health workforce, including job protections, funding for training, and support for recruitment and retention.
- Uphold the principles of transparency, science, and ethics in all public health decision-making processes.
- Resist politicization of public health by ensuring that decisions reflect evidence-based practice and the voices of affected communities.
- Strengthen legal protections for whistleblowers, public health officials, and frontline health workers advocating for population health.
- Promote interprofessional education and community engagement to build public trust and resilience in public health systems.
- Advocate for funding to support the delivery of public health services to improve health outcomes in families, neighborhoods, and communities across the nation.
- Support changes in academic curricula to prepare and assure a competent public health workforce with the qualifications, experience, and scientific understanding necessary to guide, protect, and lead.

The integrity of our public health infrastructure is vital to the health and security of every community. ACHNE stands united with our public health nursing colleagues and interprofessional practice partners in resisting policies that endanger public health and calls for immediate, collective action to restore and reinforce the principles of justice, equity, and science at the heart of our work.