



December 18, 2017

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

Dear Director Mulvaney:

On behalf of our nation's public research universities, I write to express concerns over reports that the Office of Management and Budget told officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to avoid the use of the words or phrases "vulnerable," "entitlement," "diversity," "transgender," "fetus," "evidence-based" and "science-based" as they draft Fiscal Year 2019 budget documents. Tweets from CDC Director Fitzgerald and comments from a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson do not directly refute news stories indicating the seven words and phrases should be avoided in developing FY 2019 budget documents. As such, I respectfully ask that you clarify this matter.

The CDC has established itself as the world's foremost public health agency through an unflinching commitment to free and fearless scientific discovery. The agency is able to protect public health through science precisely because its policies are based on science and evidence.

On principle, I am very concerned about efforts to restrict the CDC's language in any way as it seeks to communicate with Congress and the public about its priorities for protecting and ensuring public health. As a practical matter, it's hard to understand how the CDC could fully detail efforts to safeguard the American people from a disease such as the Zika virus without discussing the risks to a fetus. Or, for that matter, why the agency should purposefully avoid describing pregnant women as being more vulnerable to complications due to Zika or other diseases.

Our nation's public research universities are committed to continuing their strong partnership with the federal government, including the CDC, in both conducting the research to better understand diseases and other public health concerns as well as delivering treatments and developing methods for limiting outbreaks and systemic health crises. Their work is rooted in evidence-based and science-based approaches that are foundational to society's advancement.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Peter McPherson  
President, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities