BSC, NCHS
Board of Scientific Counselors,
National Center for Health Statistics

September 26, 2023

Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

Re: Recommendation to Share Generative AI Information with Public Health Organizations

Dear Dr. Cohen:

This letter conveys a recommendation and advice to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from the Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) on the fast-growing field of generative artificial intelligence (AI). Part of the BSC's charge is to make recommendations about opportunities to examine and employ new approaches for monitoring and evaluating key public health and health policy changes, with particular attention to means for automation of data collection and application of new data processing and analytic tools.

During the BSC's September 14, 2023 meeting, NCHS staff presented an update to the Board on the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in NCHS programs and other related uses. The Board is very grateful for the update and the opportunity to engage with staff expert in these areas. One aspect of the presentation highlighted CDC's innovative use of generative AI to support the agency's public health priorities – and the Board finds that states, territories, localities, and tribes (STLTs) and other public health partners would benefit from the dissemination of CDC's experience and lessons learned in the field of generative AI.

Specifically, as a result of the information and discussion during the meeting, the Board unanimously approved a motion to encourage CDC to more broadly share information with public health stakeholders as follows:

> **The BSC, NCHS recommends that CDC recognize that public health stakeholders would find information the Agency has gathered about generative AI useful and encourages the Agency to share this information more broadly.**

Key Points from the Board Discussion
The Board remarked during the discussion that CDC wisely invested time and resources into learning, understanding, and implementing uses of generative AI to benefit the public's health. The Board noted that State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial (STLT) Health Departments and other field partners often are lagging in their knowledge and understanding of the uses of generative AI. This discussion ultimately led to the development of the Board's formal recommendation that CDC proactively share information

more broadly to help public health partners in the field learn from CDC's progress including lessons learned on generative AI.

As part of the discussion, members also noted that it would be beneficial for this information to be shared more broadly at earlier stages of research, which would likely encourage STLTs and other public health partners to engage with the Agency and proactively raise questions with CDC on generative AI-related as they arise.

The Board noted that new generative AI models are released rapidly, and thus encourages CDC to look for ways to communicate information in as timely a manner possible. One member advised that CDC look for alternative, innovative information-sharing methods as white paper findings rarely make it to those working in the field.

Another area the Board discussed was applying resources for advancements in the use of generative AI to supplement existing systems at the agency. This could include funded competitions for external partners currently working in the field of generative AI to build models for public health priority areas, and opening access to trainees in an organized way so that those who typically do not have access to data, computational power, and secure infrastructure, to use generative AI for real world applications in public health. This would encourage innovation and creativity, as well as engage CDC data scientists about the possible uses of generative AI.

Finally, in light of the risks posed by generative AI, the Board urged CDC to ensure STLTs are comprehensively well-informed. This encompasses not only the substantial risk of external actors causing harm and disseminating misinformation but also the potential for unintentional internal misuse of technology by overlooking its limitations and inherent biases.

Thank you for considering the Board's recommendation. The Board is available to answer questions and will continue to support NCHS' efforts to advance innovative approaches for monitoring and evaluating important public health and health policy questions of national interest.

Sincerely,

/s/

John R. Lumpkin, MD, MPH
Chair, Board of Scientific Counselors
National Center for Health Statistics

Cc: Brian C. Moyer, PhD, Director, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC
     Nirav D. Shah, MD, JD, Principal Deputy Director, CDC
     Jennifer Layden, MD, PhD, Director, Office of Public Health Data, Surveillance and
       Technology, CDC