

April 13, 2011

U.S. House of Representatives/United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515/20510

Dear Representative/Senator:

The following leading national public health organizations express serious concern over recent Congressional proposals to eliminate, reclassify or substantially reduce the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Fund), an essential provision in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Collectively, we urge you to strongly oppose such efforts.

As you know, the Fund is a dedicated investment in community prevention and state and local public health infrastructure and workforce and is a much-needed down payment on the health and economic well being of all Americans. The Fund is among the most significant provisions in ACA that help achieve a goal set by President Obama during the 2008 campaign, "Simply put, in the absence of a radical shift towards prevention and public health, we will not be successful in containing medical costs or improving the health of the American people."¹

Nearly 600 national, state, and local organizations (see attached) support the Fund as a primary vehicle for making public health investments that would create jobs and help to lower long-term health care costs. The Fund fills a role that has the support of the American people -- a public opinion survey conducted by TFAH and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) found that 71 percent of Americans favored an increased investment in disease prevention.

States are already using Prevention Fund dollars to build epidemiology and laboratory capacity to track and respond to disease outbreaks, train the nation's public health workforce, prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, reduce tobacco use, and help control the obesity epidemic. The Fund's mandatory status guarantees an ongoing commitment to prevention unprecedented in today's "sick care" system, and eliminating it would be an enormous step backwards in our progress on cost containment, public health modernization, and wellness promotion. Senator Tom Harkin said it best in recent public testimony, "Two thirds of the increase in health care spending between 1987 and 2000 was due to increased prevalence of chronic diseases. The Prevention Fund gives us an unprecedented opportunity to bend the cost curve: overall, the return on investment in community-based prevention interventions is six dollars for every dollar invested."

¹ Obama '08, "Barack Obama's Plan for a Healthy America: Lowering Health Care Costs and Ensuring Affordable, High-Quality Health Care for All." Available from: <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/HealthPlanFull.pdf>


Millions of dollars in mandatory funding are spent each year via the Medicare, Medicaid, and other federal health care programs to pay for health care services once patients develop an acute illness, injury or chronic disease and present for treatment in our health care system. Yet prior to the creation of the Fund, there was no equivalent funding for efforts to promote wellness, prevent disease, and protect against public health or bioterror emergencies. At a time when today's children are in danger of becoming the first generation in American history to live shorter, less healthy lives than their parents, we need to get serious as a nation about our commitment to prevention, wellness, and preparedness.

Once again, we urge you to oppose efforts to reclassify or eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund. If we are serious about turning our sick care system into a disease prevention system and making wellness a priority, then now is the time to increase, rather than decrease our commitment to prevention and public health efforts.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director
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Mark Ishaug
President and CEO
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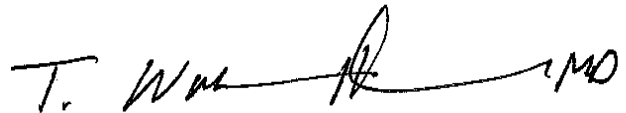
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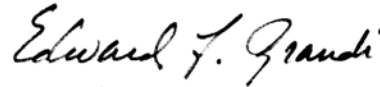
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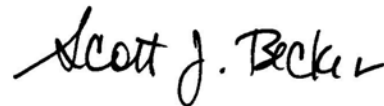
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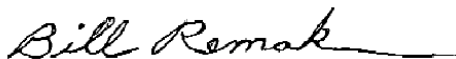
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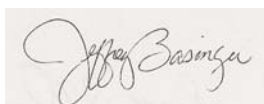
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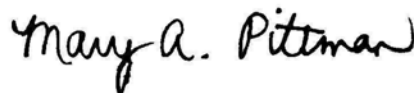
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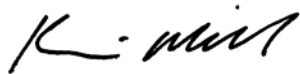
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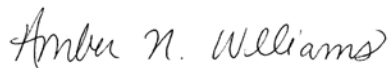
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