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Protect, Prevent, Live Well

December 13, 2011

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association (APHA), the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals and advocates in the world, I write in strong opposition to H.R. 3630, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act. This legislation would divert \$8 billion from the Prevention and Public Health Fund and also block the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from protecting public health from mercury and other air pollutants from large industrial boilers. APHA will consider using this vote in our 2011 annual congressional record.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund represents a critical investment in public health and a historic commitment to changing our health system from one that focuses on treating the sick to one that focuses on keeping people healthy. Chronic disease spending makes up a significant majority of our skyrocketing health care costs and the Prevention Fund presents an opportunity to rein in our health care spending by reducing the rate of many leading chronic diseases. The Prevention Fund's mandatory nature demonstrates an ongoing commitment to preventing disease and improving the public health of our nation.

Already, states are using Prevention Fund dollars to bolster our public health infrastructure at the state and local level, increase training capacity for the public health workforce, to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, to control the obesity epidemic, and to expand public health officials' ability to prevent and respond to infectious disease outbreaks. Diverting any portion of this funding would derail current public health activities in communities and states across the country and would leave American families less healthy and at risk in the event of a public health emergency.

We also strongly oppose the inclusion of language that would block EPA from moving forward with a rule to protect public health from mercury and other toxic air pollutants from large industrial boilers. EPA estimates this rule would provide significant health benefits including annually avoiding up to 8,100 premature deaths, 5,100 heart attacks, and 52,000 asthma attacks. Additionally the rule would provide 12 to 30 dollars in health benefits for every dollar spent to implement the standards. Congress should not use legislative riders to overturn science-based rules and regulations.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns regarding the inclusion of these unrelated matters in this legislation. We urge you to reject this bill and instead work to develop a bipartisan bill that creates jobs without endangering public health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. Alan Baker'.

J. Alan Baker
Interim Executive Director