



Protect, Prevent, Live Well

July 25, 2012

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Franken:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals and advocates in the world, I write in strong support of the Medicare Diabetes Prevention Act.

APHA vigorously supports efforts to decrease the rate of chronic diseases and improve the health of all Americans through preventive, community-based health measures. Diabetes is a prevalent chronic disease, which affects 25.8 million people, 8.3 percent of the U.S. population. As the seventh leading cause of death in the U.S., diabetes contributes to many health complications and decreased quality of life. In 2010, 10.9 million, or 26.9 percent of people 65 years and older had diabetes. Medical expenses for people with diabetes are more than double those for people without diabetes. If current trends continue, by 2020, an estimated 52 percent of the U.S. adult population will have type II diabetes or prediabetes. Fortunately, it is possible prevent this disease.

The Diabetes Prevention Program has demonstrated significant reductions in the incidence of diabetes and also to be highly cost-effective. APHA supports your legislation that would ensure coverage of this program under Medicare, offering beneficiaries increased access to DPP. Since its inception, the Medicare program has been successful in providing senior citizens and other covered populations with a high level of quality health care. Including DPP as a covered benefit for people on Medicare who are at high risk for diabetes will provide an additional tool to help shift our health system from one that focuses on treating the sick to one that focuses on keeping people healthy. It will allow seniors to live stronger and longer, and save billions of dollars in health care costs.

Thank you for your leadership on this important public health issue. We look forward to working with you on this and other initiatives to improve the health of the American people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Georges C. Benjamin'.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E)
Executive Director