



September 9, 2009

The Honorable ---
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator ---:

The current debate on health reform presents a unique opportunity to create a healthier America. In a reformed health care system, preventing disease should be valued as much as treating disease. By addressing the underlying causes of poor health, prevention saves lives, reduces disease, is cost-effective and sometimes even lowers health care costs.

Valuing prevention means removing barriers to clinical preventive services and investing in community-based prevention efforts. Health reform legislation should ensure that private and public health insurance covers recommended preventive services for patients and should provide funding to implement recommended prevention initiatives at the community level.

Tobacco use is an example of the possibilities of prevention. Each year, tobacco use is responsible for more than 400,000 deaths and nearly \$100 billion in health care costs. Twenty-one percent of all coronary heart disease deaths, 30 percent of all cancer deaths, and 90 percent of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease are attributable to smoking.

When smokers quit, their health begins to improve almost immediately; within one year, their excess risk of heart disease is cut in half. Fortunately, there are proven ways to help smokers quit and prevent young people from beginning this deadly addiction. Ensuring access to counseling sessions and FDA-approved medications has been shown to increase the proportion of smokers who attempt to quit and quit successfully and is a grade A recommendation by the United States Preventive Services Task Force. Further, in a ranking of preventive services for the U.S. population, the National Commission on Prevention Priorities rated smoking cessation services as one of the three most cost-effective prevention services available.

Several states have demonstrated the effectiveness of community-based efforts. In California, adult smoking rates were reduced by 35 percent after implementation of its Tobacco Control Program, saving an estimated \$86 billion in personal health care costs between 1989 and 2004. Maine has seen smoking rates drop 71 percent for middle school students and 64 percent for students in high school since 1997, preventing more than 26,000 young people from smoking and saving the state \$416 million in future health care costs.

Health reform legislation approved by three House committees and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee includes important clinical and community preventive services. We urge you to support the continued inclusion of clinical and community preventive services in health reform legislation as it moves through the legislative process. Prevention is an essential element of health reform. Effective prevention provisions will mean fewer premature deaths, a reduction in disease burden, and more cost-effective health care spending.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Association for Respiratory Care
American College of Cardiology
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Association of Schools of Public Health
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Lance Armstrong Foundation
National Association of City and County Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of Health
National Hispanic Health Foundation
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Latino Tobacco Control Network
Oncology Nursing Society
Partnership for Prevention
Society for Public Health Education
Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church – The General Board of Church and Society