



**PDF Internet Copy
www.FundCDC.org**

A Letter to House and Senate Leaders
The Need for Prevention in Health Reform Legislation

This letter was sent to several members of Congress. Please see page three for the full list of recipients.

October 28, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol, S-231
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

As you work through the fall to forge a final health reform measure, we write to encourage the inclusion of strong public health provisions that target health promotion and the prevention of disease. We commend House and Senate leaders who proposed a new mandatory funding stream dedicated to a prevention and health promotion trust. ***We strongly urge you to include this concept in any final health reform measure.*** Such a focus on keeping Americans healthy must be a cornerstone of meaningful health system reform.

Numerous studies of our health system show common and troubling themes:

- Americans spend more than \$2 trillion dollars annually to treat disease or to manage adverse health conditions.
- Approximately 70 percent of that amount is spent treating preventable diseases and conditions.
- The projected growth of health spending is unsustainable and will bankrupt the federal treasury if left unchecked.
- Trends for expensive and preventable conditions like obesity and diabetes are headed in the wrong direction. The data regarding the impact on children is particularly troubling.
- We spend only 2 or 3 pennies of our health dollar trying to keep Americans healthy.

While these and many other statistics provide a very strong case for investing in the research, science, and practice of public health's prevention efforts at the federal, state and local levels, media coverage and public discourse has focused on health reform's possible impact on the care and treatment of illness.

Congress has a historic opportunity to provide the American public with a forward thinking approach to health care by including an aggressively funded prevention strategy in a final health reform bill. Not all preventive services pay for themselves in a 10-year budget cycle, as was recently noted by the Congressional Budget Office. Sustained and coordinated tobacco control efforts took 40 years to lower smoking rates from over 40 percent to about 20 percent. Not only did smoking rates decline, but public perceptions and the acceptance of smoking did too.

Similarly, efforts to lower childhood lead levels took years to research and successfully implement, and our children's IQs have risen as a result. The fluoridation of water supplies, childhood vaccines, the installation of seatbelts in cars and many other public health efforts need government leadership and take time - but result in a healthier and safer public.

While interventions to end the obesity epidemic or reverse skyrocketing diabetes rates may take time to work, it is essential to implement evidence-based policies and programs as soon as possible to slow these epidemics and achieve long-term impacts. To ignore these and other public health challenges because their solutions extend beyond a 10-year budget window is shortsighted and irresponsible. Our nation's public health challenges require sustained investments. We must start now and work ever more diligently to ensure a robust and future commitment to prevention and health promotion.

While the debate and substance of the health reform proposals you consider will undoubtedly focus on the care Americans receive when they are ill, Congress must also focus on doing far more to preserve good health for all Americans. We ask that you seize this unique opportunity to greatly enhance our efforts to protect the health of the public. ***Invest in our nation's public health infrastructure by ensuring a well funded mandatory prevention trust is included in a final health reform measure.***

Sincerely,

Kenneth S. Apfel, *former Commissioner of the Social Security Administration and former Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

Georges C. Benjamin, M.D., *former Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and former Acting Commissioner of the Health Department, District of Columbia*

John J. Callahan, M.R.P., Ph.D., *former Assistant Secretary of Management and Budget, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and former Acting Commissioner of the Social Security Administration*

Matt Carroll, *Director, Cleveland Department of Public Health*

S. Ward Casscells, M.D., *former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs*

Debbie I. Chang, M.P.H., *former Director of Legislation and Policy, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and Co-Chair, Department of Health and Human Services State Children's Health Insurance Program Implementation Steering Committee*

Thomas A. Farley, M.D., M.P.H., *New York City Commissioner of Health and Mental Hygiene*

Marty Fenstersheib, M.D., M.P.H., *Health Officer for Santa Clara County*

Barbara Ferrer, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.Ed., *Director, Boston Public Health Commission*

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., *Health Officer and Director of Public Health, Los Angeles County, member, National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine, founding member of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and Vice-Chair, Community Preventive Services Task Force*

David Fleming, M.D., *Director and Health Officer, Seattle & King County Department of Health, former Deputy Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Bill Foege, M.D., M.P.H., *former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Julie L. Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H., *former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

The Honorable Newt Gingrich, *former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and founder, Center for Health Transformation*

Mitchell H. Katz, M.D., *Director, San Francisco Department of Public Health*

Arthur L. Kellermann, M.D., M.P.H., *elected member, Institute of Medicine of the United States National Academies and former Professional Staff of the United States House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform*

Jeffrey P. Koplan, M.D., M.P.H., *former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

James O. Mason, M.D., M.P.H., *former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H., *former Acting Surgeon General of the United States, and the former Deputy Surgeon General*

Mayor Greg Nickels, *Seattle, Washington, President, United States Conference of Mayors*

Michael T. Osterholm, Ph.D., M.P.H., *former Special Advisor to then–Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson on issues related to bioterrorism and public health preparedness*

The Honorable John Edward Porter, J.D., *former member of Congress and Chairman of the United States House of Representatives Labor, Health and Humans Services and Education Appropriations Committee*

William L. Roper, M.D., M.P.H., *former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D., *former Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer for the US Department of Homeland Security and former Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*

David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., *former Surgeon General, Assistant Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services and Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

David J. Sencer, M.D., M.P.H., *former Director, Centers for Disease Control and former Commissioner of Health, New York City*

The Honorable Louis Stokes, *former member of Congress and member of the United States House of Representatives Labor, Health and Humans Services and Education Appropriations Committee*

Kurt Triplett, *King County Executive, Seattle, Washington*

Kim Turner, D.D.S., M.B.A., *Deputy Director Health and Human Services, Fulton County, Atlanta, Georgia*

Stephen L. Williams, *Director, Houston Department of Health and Human Services*

Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D., *former Director, National Institutes of Health*

#

NOTE: This letter was also sent to:

SENATE

The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable Susan M. Collins
The Honorable Christopher Dodd
The Honorable Mike Enzi
The Honorable Charles Grassley
The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe

HOUSE

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader John A. Boehner
The Honorable Joe Barton
The Honorable Dave Camp
The Honorable Howard McKeon
The Honorable George Miller
The Honorable Charles Rangel
The Honorable Henry Waxman

President Barack Obama's Administration was sent a copy of this letter.