

August \_\_\_\_, 2010

Dear Senator:

As the Senate considers the *Small Business Jobs and Credit Act* (H.R. 5297), the undersigned organizations strongly urge you to **oppose** the use of the Prevention and Public Health Fund from the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as an offset for an amendment offered by Senator Johanns (No. 4531). Such an action would virtually eliminate the Fund, and mark a severe blow to this monumental commitment to prevention and public health under the Act.

ACA included historic reforms that have the potential to transform our health system. For too long, we have focused spending on treating people once they are sick rather than preventing illness in the first place. The Prevention and Public Health Fund (Fund) is urgently needed to address the many emerging health threats our country faces and the persistent chronic disease rates that we must begin to control. The Fund is intended ensure a coordinated, comprehensive, sustainable, and accountable approach to improving our country's health outcomes through the most effective prevention and public health programs.

ACA clearly states that the money be used "for programs authorized by the Public Health Service Act, for prevention, wellness, and public health activities." The money would be strategically used to support disease prevention by promoting access to vaccines, building the public health workforce, and investing in community-based prevention. Furthermore, the Act specifically states that community-based prevention funding must only support evidence-based prevention programs, which have been shown through scientific research to reduce chronic disease and address health disparities. Research has shown that effective community level prevention activities focusing on nutrition, physical activity and smoking cessation can reduce chronic disease rates and have a significant return on investment.

Already in Fiscal Year 2010, we have seen these funds invested for programs to promote tobacco control and implement tobacco cessation services and campaigns, as well as obesity prevention, better nutrition and physical activity. The fund has been invested to support state, local and tribal public health efforts to advance health promotion and disease prevention, and to build state and local capacity to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks. The funds are also being used to support the training of current and next generation public health professionals.

The Fund is a unique opportunity to truly bend the cost curve on health care spending. Seventy-five percent of all health care costs in our country are spent on the treatment of chronic diseases, many of which could be easily prevented. Further, in a public opinion survey conducted just prior to the passage of the Act, Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) found that 71 percent of Americans favored an increased investment in disease prevention and that disease prevention was one of the most popular components of health reform.

We must ensure that we capitalize on the unprecedented opportunity to transform our public health system by investing in prevention and public health. **We urge you to vote NO on the prevention fund offset within the Johanns amendment.**

Sincerely,

Trust for America's Health