

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

August 4, 2010

Dear Senator:

As the Senate considers the *Small Business Jobs and Credit Act* (H.R. 5297), the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) strongly urges you to **oppose** the use of the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) as an offset in amendment No. 4531, offered by Senator Johanns. The proposed offset would virtually eliminate the critical Prevention and Public Health Fund included in the new *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* (ACA). The PPHF creates an unprecedented opportunity to improve health through public health and community-based prevention. It would be imprudent to eliminate this Fund, which will help over time to prevent disease, thereby reducing health care costs.

Right now, 75 percent of all healthcare costs are spent on the treatment of chronic diseases, many of which could have been prevented. Obesity alone is estimated to cost the nation \$147 billion per year. Chronic diseases cost the U.S. an additional \$1 trillion each year in lost productivity. Injuries are the leading cause of death for Americans ages one through 44 and cost more than \$117 billion per year.

Health insurance is essential to pay for people to get medical care when they are sick. But it is not enough to keep them healthy in the first place. The medical care system treats patients one at a time, but public health protects the entire community. The public health system provides population-wide prevention and protection that is beyond the capacity of the medical care system or health insurers. Local health departments are the bedrock of this system. They keep food safe, detect and stop outbreaks of disease, and help create conditions in the community that make it easier for people to make healthier individual choices in their diet and exercise.

Already in Fiscal Year 2010, PPHF funds have been invested in 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 health department efforts to advance health promotion and disease prevention, and to build state and local capacity to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks. Funds are also being used to support the training of current and next generation public health professionals.

Again, I urge you to support the Prevention and Public Health Fund by opposing its use as an offset in the Johanns amendment. The PPHF is essential to reorient our health system towards prevention of disease and injury and improve the public's health.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Pestronk
Executive Director

