

Dear Congressional Representative:

Division C, which would create a National Prevention and Wellness Strategy, is an integral part of any meaningful health reform. We commend Congress for recognizing in its health reform proposals the importance of prevention and the need to direct resources and funding to creating a policy across government agencies and establish public health priorities. The Public Health Investment Fund created in this bill would be a reliable, dedicated funding stream for public health and prevention that is needed to meet the many emerging health threats we must face, and the persistent chronic disease rates that we must begin to control. The Investment Fund would allow us to build upon what we know already works and to test new approaches. It would enable us to prioritize prevention and health, instead of just treatment. The Investment Fund would also help finance the delivery of evidence-based community-based prevention and wellness services grants. 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. By fostering community environments that keep people from getting sick and injured *in the first place*, community prevention is an important way to substantially improve health equity and reduce demand on our overburdened health care system – especially in low-income communities and communities of color.

We offer the following recommendations to ensure a successful, strong and sustainable initiative:

1. Invest in community prevention as a core component of health reform
2. Promote collaboration across fields and sectors encouraging healthy people and healthy places
3. Prioritize people and places that are most vulnerable
4. Engage community residents and leaders in shaping solutions
5. Educate and train leaders and the health workforce
6. Develop a national strategy and establish high-level leadership to promote community prevention and health equity

Division C would address all of these goals and insure that we have a strong public health system to help fight ever increasing chronic disease levels and to protect us from health threats, natural disasters, and potential acts of terrorism that are beyond our control. As an organization engaged with numerous successful community, foundation, and government prevention initiatives around the country, we have seen the value and vitality of a coordinated prevention strategy in improving health across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. We urge you to include a prevention and wellness strategy and funding in the final legislation. We are enthusiastic about the potential for these measures to have a fundamental impact on the health of the nation. Please feel free to contact us for more information.

Sincerely yours,
Larry Cohen
Executive Director
Prevention Institute