



YMCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

July 16, 2009

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
~~2181 Rayburn House Office Building~~
Washington DC 2015

Dear Chairmen Rangel, Waxman and Miller:

We are writing to offer sincerest thanks for your strong prevention provisions in the Affordable Health Choices Act included in Title XXXI-- Prevention and Wellness. These provisions would lower disease rates, improve quality of life, and reduce health care costs for millions of Americans. We know that strategic investments in evidence-based disease prevention programs in communities can result in a big payoff in a short time -- reducing health care costs, increasing the productivity of the nation's workforce, and helping people lead healthier lives.

In particular we are pleased with the inclusion of community-based providers in the development of the National Prevention and Wellness Strategy, Prevention Task Forces (e.g. the Community Prevention Stakeholders Board) and **importantly** the authorization of the Community Prevention and Wellness Research Grants and Community Prevention and Wellness Services Grants.

1) We believe the Community Prevention and Wellness Services Grants could support the ongoing efforts of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through its Healthy Communities Program. To date this program has funded 180 communities convened by YMCAs and state and local health departments. YMCAs-alone have convened the highest level of diverse leaders in over 100 of these communities to drive change toward healthier living environments. Through the Healthy Communities Program, CDC enables national organizations like the YMCA to partner in this work. YMCA of the USA represents a national network of community-based organizations and has used our network to replicate successful strategies and create a nationwide peer-to-peer learning community and movement to support this work. Some successes of the Healthy Communities Program in various sites include:

- Restoring physical education (PE) to the school day and requiring physical activity and healthy snacks in child care sites
- Enhancing farmers markets and community gardens in areas lacking grocery stores or with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables

- Changing zoning requirements to ensure that new developments include sidewalks
- Building new trails and bike paths
- Implementing safe routes to school and 'complete street' strategies.

A recent report by Trust for America's Health concluded that an investment of \$10 per person/per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within five years. That is a return of \$5.60 for every \$1.

2) We believe the Community Prevention and Wellness Research Grants could support our ongoing work to prevent Type 2 Diabetes in the 57 million Americans with PRE-diabetes. Multiple prediction models have now demonstrated that a structured lifestyle intervention to prevent diabetes can produce a COST SAVINGS within 2 to 3 years time if the direct costs of the intervention can be reduced to \$250 - \$300 per year. With more than 50 million Americans with PRE-diabetes today, cost has been a barrier to offering these interventions. Last year CDC funded YMCA of the USA to continue the replication of the national Diabetes Prevention Program in community settings. Our emerging research and demonstration projects with a few YMCAs under the guidance and leadership of Indiana University researchers show that a carefully designed group lifestyle intervention can be delivered for less than \$250 per person per year in community settings and can achieve similar weight loss results as the more costly Diabetes Prevention Program in adults with PRE-diabetes.

We recognize that the Prevention and Wellness Trust included in the House bill would strategically support disease prevention, public health, the health workforce, and research that would directly improve the health of Americans while reducing health care costs, and we will do all that we can to help preserve this provision in the final bill. Investing in prevention gives all Americans the opportunity to lead healthier lives and ensures our workforce is strong and healthy to compete with the rest of the world.

On behalf of the 2686 YMCAs in 10,000 communities across the country, I want to offer our deepest thanks to you for your commitment to healthy communities and the prevention of chronic disease.

Sincerely,



Audrey Tayse Haynes
Senior Vice President, Chief Government Affairs Officer
YMCA of the USA