

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 12, 2015

Dear Colleague,

As we work together to strengthen our health care system, it is critical that we focus on ways to keep people healthy and not just on treating them once they are sick. Investing in disease prevention and health promotion can help more Americans enjoy longer, healthier, and more productive lives while also reducing overall health care spending.

Chronic, non-communicable diseases—such as obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and arthritis—are among the most common, costly, and preventable of all health problems. In the United States, chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability. More than two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, and half of all adults suffer from one or more chronic conditions. As a result, more than three-quarters of all health care spending goes toward care for preventable, non-communicable illness.

The total costs of heart disease and stroke are estimated to be \$315.4 billion annually; the cost of care associated with diagnosed diabetes is roughly \$176 billion annually; and the cost of treating arthritis and related conditions is about \$128 billion annually. Investing just \$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.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund (the Fund or PPHF) is the federal government's single largest investment in prevention. It has supported an array of innovative, evidence-based initiatives to reduce chronic disease rates and lower health care costs. Among these initiatives are the following:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP), an evidence-based intervention to prevent type 2 diabetes, is helping at-risk adults learn how to make healthy lifestyle changes to lose weight and control their blood sugar. The NDPP is based on successful pilot programs run by the YMCA in Minneapolis, MN and Indianapolis, IN that showed that the intervention reduced participants' risk for developing type 2 diabetes by 58 percent.
- The CDC Community Transformation Grant Program (CTG) provided funding to local communities to support coalition building and implementation of prevention activities to support healthy choices and lifestyles and reduce the incidence and prevalence of chronic disease and obesity. For example:
 - In Florida, Broward Regional Health Planning Council received a \$1.8 million in CTG grant to implement a multi-sector community partnership focused on reducing obesity and heart disease by increasing low-income children's access to physical activity and healthy foods, among other activities.

- In Georgia, the Cobb County Board of Health received a \$1.5 million CTG grant to partner with 10 local organizations to establish and improve prevention programs (including a special focus on preventing and controlling high blood pressure) in Marietta and throughout the county.
- The CDC component of the Million Hearts initiative is a five-year U.S. Department of Health and Human Services effort in partnership with health plans, clinicians, nonprofit organizations and the private sector to prevent one million heart attacks and strokes by 2017 using evidence-based community and clinical prevention.
- Additionally, starting in late 2014, PPHF dollars are now supporting new CDC chronic disease prevention and community health promotion efforts in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. New grantees, including state and local health departments, community-based organizations, tribal organizations, and others, are working towards the shared goals of reducing our chronic disease burden.

We recognize the difficult choices that need to be made with respect to the budget, which is precisely why it is so important to invest in these evidence-based federal, state, and local prevention and public health initiatives. These programs improve the health and wellness of Americans, and in doing so, restrain the growth of health care spending. We urge you to consider the tremendous life-saving and cost-saving potential of these programs and join us in supporting the Prevention and Public Health Fund.

Sincerely,



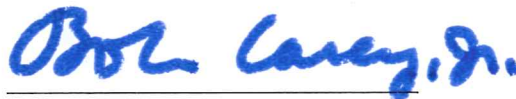
Al Franken
United States Senator



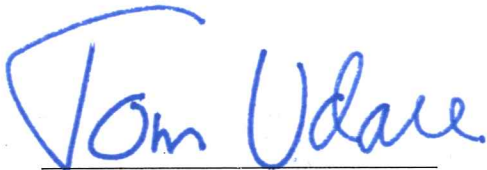
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator




Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



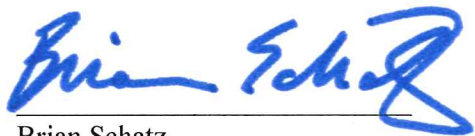
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



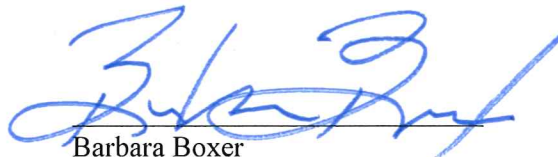
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



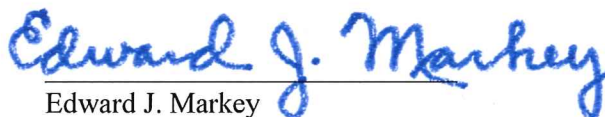
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator