



American
Public Health
Association

PROTECT, PREVENT, LIVE WELL

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April 16, 2013

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman
The Honorable Henry Waxman, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Waxman:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals who have championed the health of all people and communities around the world for more than 140 years, I write in opposition to H.R. 1549, the Helping Sick Americans Now Act. While we support expanding health insurance coverage to all uninsured individuals, we strongly oppose using the Prevention and Public Health Fund to pay for this effort.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund represents a critical investment in public health and a historic commitment to changing our health system from one that focuses on treating the sick to one that focuses on keeping people healthy. Chronic disease spending makes up a strong majority of our skyrocketing health care costs and the fund presents an opportunity to rein in our health care spending by reducing the rate of many leading chronic diseases. The fund's mandatory nature demonstrates an ongoing commitment to preventing disease and improving the health of our nation.

Already, the fund is being used to control the obesity epidemic, reduce tobacco use, modernize vaccination systems and for other important interventions that will improve the health of the nation's children and contribute to the advancement of student achievement. Additionally, the fund is increasing training for the public health workforce, preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and expanding our public health departments' abilities to prevent and respond to infectious disease outbreaks.

Public health funding, including the Prevention and Public Health Fund, has already seen significant reductions in recent years. Additional cuts to these programs will lead to higher health care costs down the road. We urge you to maintain the investment in the Prevention and Public Health Fund and to reject any efforts to reduce or eliminate this funding or divert it from its intended purpose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E)
Executive Director



Congressman Fred Upton, Chairman
Congressman Henry Waxman, Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2013

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Waxman,

On behalf of the Trust for America's Health, I write to oppose H.R. 1549, the "Helping Sick Americans Act." While we support the goal of expanding health care coverage of Americans with pre-existing conditions, we strongly oppose paying for this effort by raiding the Prevention and Public Health Fund (the Fund). Slashing our investment in primary prevention in order to pay for more health care spending would be counterproductive and do nothing to prevent disease or lower 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, yet less than five percent of national health spending is devoted to public health. The consequences of years of neglect are clear – hundreds of billions of dollars in mandatory funding are spent each year through Medicare, Medicaid, and other federal health care programs to pay for health care services once patients develop an acute illness, disability, injury, or chronic disease and present for treatment in our health care system.

The Prevention Fund is our first sustained national investment in prevention and is intended to ensure a coordinated, comprehensive, sustainable, and accountable approach to improving our country's health outcomes through the most effective prevention and public health programs. Supporting disease prevention is essential if we want to keep Americans healthy and bring health costs down for everyone.

States and communities are already using these prevention dollars to build epidemiology and laboratory capacity to track and respond to disease outbreaks, train the nation's public health workforce, modernize vaccine systems and immunize children, prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, reduce tobacco use, promote behavioral health, help control the obesity epidemic, and build the evidence base to continually enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of these public health programs.

Further cuts to the Fund would compromise our ability to make progress on cost containment, public health modernization, and wellness promotion. I urge you to oppose H.R. 1549.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi".

Jeffrey Levi, Ph.D.
Executive Director