



American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



April 12, 2011

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Members Waxman and Pallone:

The March of Dimes Foundation and the American Academy of Pediatrics would like to share our serious concern over recent proposals to eliminate or reclassify the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Fund).

As you know, the Fund is a dedicated investment in community prevention and state and local public health infrastructure and workforce. It is a much-needed down-payment on the health and economic well-being of all Americans. As such, we are strongly opposed to any legislation designed to eliminate or reclassify the Fund. Legislative proposals such as H.R. 1217 jeopardize the Fund's potential to make significant improvements in the health of all Americans.

The fact is that prevention works. Vaccines have saved countless lives by immunizing children against fatal and disabling illnesses like polio and measles. Since fortification of enriched grain products with folic acid, which has been proven to reduce the incidence of birth defects, the rate of neural tube defects like spina bifida in infants has decreased by 26 percent. Prevention equals protection. However, the benefits of these and many other prevention programs are often underacknowledged and unreported because prevented health conditions are invisible to policymakers and the public.

Prevention is the best way to avoid or reduce the impact of expensive, long-term health and economic consequences. However, according to *Health Affairs*, the United States spent 16 percent of its Gross Domestic Product in 2006 on treatment of health conditions; yet, our health outcomes consistently score lower when compared to other developed countries. Prior to the creation of the Fund, there was little dedicated funding for efforts to prevent sickness. Maintaining the Fund as it was signed into law as part of the Affordable Care Act is essential to proactively pursuing cost-effective promotion, prevention and protection activities designed to reduce the need for expensive reactive treatment for individuals once they have developed an acute illness, injury or chronic disease. In our current challenging fiscal environment where Congress is looking to save money by cutting federally-funded programs, prevention should be considered an investment worth saving. Now is not the time to perpetuate the cycle of paying a pound for a cure when we could be paying a penny for prevention.

The Affordable Care Act explicitly reserves the right of Congress to allocate Fund dollars as they see fit within the normal appropriations process. This provision was inserted into the Affordable Care Act for the express purpose of preserving the ability of appropriators to exercise their judgment in setting funding priorities while maintaining this important fiscal commitment to prevention.

Once again, we urge you to continue to oppose efforts to eliminate or reclassify the Prevention and Public Health Fund. Thank you in advance for giving thoughtful consideration to the adverse impact that would be felt by all Americans if Congress retreats on prevention by eliminating or reclassifying the Prevention and Public Health Fund.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
March of Dimes Foundation