

October 14, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of all those who work in or with schools to promote the health of children and youth, as well as the adults they will become and school faculty and staff, the American School Health Association (ASHA) urges you to press for including **wellness and prevention** initiatives in the final version of health reform legislation.

In your September 9 address to Congress, you highlighted the importance of “routine check ups and preventative care.” However, prevention and wellness policies must incorporate not only vital clinical services but also initiatives designed to promote healthy lifestyles and communities. If we intervene early with children and youth, we can prevent many of the adverse health outcomes that cost individuals and society so dearly financially and in lost potential. Health care access alone will not resolve our nation’s health crisis; prevention must be a cornerstone of health reform if we are to bend the cost curve. Since schools are where children and youth are readily available, they must be included in the solution. With at least 70 percent of all health dollars spent on chronic disease, we as a society must use evidence-based interventions that prevent disease and reduce disability.

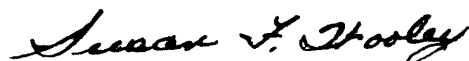
To that end, we strongly urge you to publicly support:

Development of a *National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy* that would set specific goals and objectives for improving the health of the nation through federally-supported prevention, health promotion, and public health programs, and establish measurable actions and timelines for meeting prevention and health promotion goals, starting in childhood.

Establishment of a *National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council* to provide coordination and leadership with respect to prevention, wellness and health promotion practices, the public health system, and community-based interventions that include the schools to reduce chronic disease rates and develop stronger evidence-based programs.

We are at a moral crossroads in this nation’s fight for basic human rights including good health for all. ASHA’s members appreciate your attention to prevention and wellness in the negotiations on health reform, urge you to continue your support, and stand ready to assist you and the Congress in achieving our national health goals.

Sincerely,



Susan F. Wooley, PhD, CHES
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer