

March 4, 2009

Dora L. Hughes, M.D., M.P.H.
Counselor to the Secretary
Dept. of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20201

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Deputy Director
Office of Health Reform
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Dr. Hughes and Dr. Lambrew:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are pleased that the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA) included \$1 billion for a Prevention and Wellness Fund. In particular, we are pleased with the inclusion of \$650 million for evidence-based clinical and community based prevention and wellness strategies. This funding will help stimulate job creation and serve as a down payment on public health programs expected to be addressed during the upcoming health care reform debate. In the coming months, as many more Americans may lose their jobs and their health coverage, it is essential that we invest in public health programs and infrastructure to support healthy lifestyles, in order to minimize preventable health care costs and begin to orient our health system toward wellness and prevention. As the Obama Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services make decisions as to the allocation of the prevention and wellness funding, we urge you to consider the following.

We respectfully request that you significantly invest in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Healthy Communities program. This program provides funding to communities, states and tribes to bring together key stakeholders to identify and improve policies and environmental factors influencing health in order to reduce the burden of tobacco use, obesity and other chronic diseases. The Healthy Communities program has an already-established infrastructure that we can rely upon to get funds in the hands of national organizations and communities with a proven record of success in administering population based health programs. We should build upon this success through an expansion of this program and its components:

- REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health) builds upon innovative approaches to focus on racial and ethnic groups, with a goal of improving people's health in our communities, health care settings, schools and worksites.
- The Healthy Communities program implements public health interventions that

are evidence-based and successful in changing people's lives by convening and training teams of community leaders to develop and implement plans to reduce the burden of obesity and other chronic diseases.

- **ACHIEVE** (Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and Environmental change) develops and implements policies and strategies for communities to help prevent or manage risk factors for diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and arthritis through partnership with selected national organizations. Communities are able to capitalize on the experience and expertise of national organizations in strengthening community leadership, building capacity, and activating change.

When allocating ARRA prevention and wellness funds, to maximize the impact of public health programs, including the Healthy Communities program, we encourage you to require intra-agency and interdepartmental coordination of these programs. We hope that Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will assure a department-wide approach to promoting prevention and healthier lifestyles and award funds in an integrated fashion and address multiple health challenges that communities are facing through a coordinated approach.

We strongly recommend that the Secretary leverage the available funding cross-functionally with the economic stimulus funding in other sectors of the department. In addition, prevention and wellness funding should be coordinated with the transportation funding guidelines included in this legislation. To realize the benefits of community prevention programs, it is important to have the infrastructure, such as walkways, bicycle paths, and parks, to enable the programs to be successful. To improve the health of communities, a number of different factors, ranging from the built environment to health, housing and education will need to be addressed. We hope that you will work with partners from across the government to achieve maximum results as you award funds.

Strengthening communities is central to our effort to rebuild our country. The Healthy Communities program brings together key stakeholders in communities to improve our nation's health, which is a sound investment in our future. We respectfully request that you utilize funds from the ARRA to strengthen and expand this program. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Access to Wholistic and Productic Living Institute Inc- Prince George's County
Maryland
American Lung Association
American Psychological Association
B Free CEED: National Center of Excellence in the Elimination of Hepatitis B
Disparities
Black Women's Health Imperative

Boston Public Health Commission, REACH US
Bronx Health REACH/ New York Center of Excellence to Eliminate Health Disparity
Children's Hospital Boston
Communities IMPACT Diabetes Center (NY)
Community Health Councils
Envision Excellence
Fundacion Familia Sana, Inc. (FL)
Genesee County REACH US Program, YOUR Center Hillsborough County Anti
Drug Alliance
Healthy Family Foundation, Corp (FL)
Los Angeles BioMedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center
National Association of City and County Health Officials
REACH U.S. Lawndale Health Promotion Project
REACH US SEA-CEED
Khmer Health Advocates - REACH US Coalition
Midwest Latino Health Research, Training and Policy Center at the University of
Illinois at Chicago
National Cambodian American Health Initiative
National REACH Coalition
National Recreation and Park Association
Society for Public Health Education
Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium's Steps to a Healthier SE Alaska
Southeastern US Center of Excellence for the Elimination of Disparities (SUCCEED)
REACH Charleston and Georgetown Diabetes Coalition
REACH US, Virginia Commonwealth University
Regional Asthma Management & Prevention (RAMP)
TAKE CHARGE!!! Lifestyle Management, Inc
The Promoting Healthy Pregnancies Coalition, Richmond, VA
Trust for America's Health
University of Arizona National Center of Excellence in Women's Health
Vietnamese Social Services of Minnesota
YMCA of Greater Cleveland
YMCA of the USA