



**Meredith K. Appy**  
**President**

October 14, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
United States President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the Home Safety Council (HSC), the only national nonprofit solely dedicated to preventing home-related injuries, we would like to thank you for your continued leadership and support for prevention and wellness programs in health care reform. Specifically, HSC requests that any national health care reform package include a National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy and Prevention and Public Health Fund.

Many unintentional injuries are largely preventable. For example, falls are the leading cause of death among adults age 65 and older. Each year, one in three Americans age 65 and older falls and the consequences can be devastating. The most recent data shows that 1.9 million older adults were treated in hospital emergency departments for injuries due to falls, and about 492,000 were subsequently hospitalized. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the total cost of this preventable injury is **\$80.9 billion, including \$19 billion in direct medical costs annually.**

Until recently, the federal government dedicated only \$1 million each year to address older adult falls research, programs, awareness, and related prevention initiatives. During the appropriations process for Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010, falls prevention efforts were addressed by the House of Representatives which increased funding to \$2.2 million for CDC's National Center for Injury Prevent and Control.

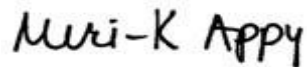
Unintentional poisoning is another example of how injuries can impact families and place a strain on the health care system. According to the CDC, unintentional poisoning was second only to motor vehicle crashes as a cause of unintentional injury death in 2005 (CDC 2008). The most recent data show that **poisonings led to \$26 billion in medical expenses and made up 6% of the economic costs of all injuries in the United States.**

Unintentional injuries are an enormous burden on our economy and our health care system. Fortunately, evidence-based strategies and public awareness have proven that there are steps that can be taken to prevent injuries and increase the likelihood for full recovery when they do occur. By incorporating these strategies into our communities and everyday activities, we can improve the opportunity for all individuals to lead active, useful, and fulfilling lives.

HSC joins with the many public health and safety organizations to encourage the recognition, funding, and cost savings that are possible through evidence-based prevention programs. For example, **research shows that for every dollar invested in a falls prevention program the return on investment is \$2.50.**

It is imperative that a National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy and Prevention and Public Health Fund be included in any comprehensive health care reform package. We urge you to protect these provisions of the legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meri-K Appy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Meri-K Appy  
President