



NATIONAL NETWORK OF PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTES

Fostering Innovations that Improve Health

October 13, 2009

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

Dear President Obama,

The National Network of Public Health Institutes expresses strong support for the public health and prevention provisions included in both the Senate HELP Committee's Affordable Health Choices Act and the House Tri-Committee America's Affordable Health Choices Act. As a national membership organization, we represent broad geographic support from our 32 members in 26 states (Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin) as well as several metropolitan areas such as New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago and the DC area. The federal government does not currently have any structure or plan that coordinates health policy across government to assess our public health status, establish national priorities, and identify health goals and objectives. The Strategies outlined in these bills would accomplish those goals. In particular, we would like to express our strong support for the establishment of a National Prevention and Wellness Strategy, a Public Health Investment Fund and investment in the Public Health Workforce and core public health infrastructure.

In order to create a renewed focus on public health and wellness, we need a **National Prevention and Wellness Strategy**. As outlined in the bills, the Strategy would set specific goals in prevention and wellness activities. It would also identify health disparities in prevention and wellness activities and establish national priorities for prevention research. We believe the Strategy will help focus our nation's prevention activities and help achieve progress in meeting prevention and wellness goals.

To facilitate implementation of the Strategy, and to prioritize prevention, we need an expanded and sustainable funding stream to support prevention, wellness, and public health activities. Toward that end, we strongly support the creation of a **Prevention and Public Health Investment Fund**. A portion of this Fund would be authorized to support a **Prevention and**

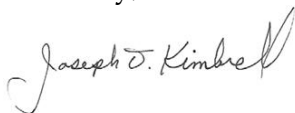
Wellness Trust, including allocations for core public health infrastructure and activities for state and local health entities; community-based prevention and wellness services; prevention and wellness research; and clinical and community-based prevention task forces. As you know, high rates of chronic disease are one of the biggest drivers of health care costs. The country will continue to struggle to contain health care costs until we do a better job of keeping people healthier and preventing disease. The Investment Fund and Prevention and Wellness Trust will help to reorient our system from a reactive, treatment-centered approach to a system focusing on wellness and health promotion.

A strong public health workforce is critical to support each of these strategies outlined. We enthusiastically support the **Public Health Workforce** investment that this health reform strategy includes. Shortages in the public health workforce are at an all time high. This investment will establish a Public Health Workforce Corps, modeled after the very successful National Health Service Corps, provide support for critical training programs and promote preventative medicine and public health training opportunities for physicians. These crucial activities would help to address the persistent workforce shortages that we're experiencing in state and local health departments and would also promote preventive approach to medicine.

NNPHI also strongly supports the **Core Public Health Infrastructure Activities**, including the establishment of a public health accreditation program for health departments as well as the identification of national goals and objectives in prevention and wellness that take into account public health measures and standards such as Healthy People and the National Public Health Performance Standards. Investment in Core Public Health Infrastructure will ensure the protection of health in every community by advancing the quality and performance of public health systems and public health departments.

We urge you to communicate your support for meaningful prevention and wellness provisions, including a National Prevention and Wellness Strategy, a Public Health Investment Fund and strategic investment in Public Health Workforce and core public health infrastructure, with Congressional leadership

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph D. Kimbrell".

Joseph Kimbrell, MA, LCSW
CEO
National Network of Public Health Institutes