



SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION

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7 October 2009

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

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the over 4,000 behavioral scientists and health promotion practitioners throughout the United States and 25 international countries, the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) is writing to urge Congress to include **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 not incorporate not only vital clinical services but also initiatives designed to promote healthy lifestyles and communities, with special attention to historically underserved populations.

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. With at least 70 percent of all health dollars spent on chronic disease, it is vital that we use evidence-based interventions to prevent disease and reduce disability. Racial and ethnic communities are disproportionately burdened by chronic disease, and we must incorporate culturally and linguistically competent prevention and wellness policies if we are to ameliorate the estimated \$60 billion spent unnecessarily in 2006 to treat health inequities.

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

- Development of a *National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy*, which 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.
- 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, community-based interventions, and integrative health care to reduce chronic disease rates; address health disparities; and develop stronger evidence-based programs.
- Reestablishment of the *National Center for Health Workforce Analysis* to conduct and support statistical and epidemiological activities for assessing and improving the supply; distribution; racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity; and development of the current and future health workforce, including health educators who play a critical role in translating research into effective community-based interventions.

We are at a moral crossroads in this nation’s fight for health and liberty for all. SOPHE appreciates your steadfast attention to prevention and wellness in the final hours of negotiation on health reform and stands ready to assist you and the Congress in achieving our national health goals.

Sincerely,

M. Elaine Auld, MPH, CHES
Chief Executive Officer