



February 10, 2009

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

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of Trust for America's Health (TFAH), I would like to express support for the robust public health provisions included in the House-approved version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. TFAH is extremely disappointed by the Senate's elimination of \$5.8 billion for prevention and wellness funding in its version of the legislation. The funding for public health and disease prevention in the stimulus bill is a down payment toward reducing health care costs over the long term, and would provide a pathway toward healthcare reform.

On February 4th, at the signing ceremony for the State Children's Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP) legislation, you called the stimulus the "single largest investment in prevention and wellness, tackling problems like smoking and obesity and helping people live longer healthier lives." We appreciate your strong support, and urge you to actively work with Congressional leadership to ensure these critical funds are in the legislation which ultimately reaches your desk for signature.

Last year, state and local health departments lost over 11,000 jobs, and it is projected that there will be 10,000 vacant positions in health departments over the next year that will not be filled due to budget shortfalls. Stimulus funding is clearly needed to help restore these cuts and create new jobs. Further, as unemployment rates soar, it is especially important to have a strong safety net to support individuals who are losing their health coverage. Prevention and wellness funding would help state and local health departments and community-based organizations continue to provide basic health services, like immunizations and preventive services, free of charge to those who cannot afford them during these difficult economic times.

As the House and Senate move to reconcile the differences in their respective versions of this vital legislation, your leadership will be essential toward defense of the \$3 billion in the House-passed bill for a Prevention and Wellness Fund. Over the past few weeks, the public health community has come together in support of these investments. Enclosed is a letter signed by over 160 leading organizations dedicated to promoting the public's health that was delivered to

members of the Senate, urging that they maintain prevention and wellness funding. A similar letter will soon be sent to conferees in support of the \$3 billion in the House-passed measure.

On behalf of my colleagues at TFAH, we look forward to the opportunity to work with you and your staff on these and other issues of great importance to the nation's health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Jeffrey Levi, PhD
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Rahm Emanuel, Chief of Staff
Melody C. Barnes, Director, Domestic Policy Council
The Honorable Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Jeanne M. Lambrew, Deputy Director, White House Office of Health Reform