



February 10, 2009

Dear Conferees:

We are writing to express our support for the robust public health provisions included in the House-passed version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and our extreme disappointment over the \$5.8 billion in prevention and wellness funding stripped from the Senate bill. **As a member of the Conference Committee, we urge you to maintain the House-passed level of \$3 billion for prevention and wellness in the final enacted version of the bill, especially the \$500 million in funding to support the Healthy Communities Program at CDC.**

The public health community has been hit hard by the economic downturn with state and local health departments losing as many as 11,000 workers. **The public health investments in the House-passed bill would enable the creation of as many as 40,000 jobs.** Additionally a focus on community health can lead to job creation through substantial returns on investment. In its report, entitled *Prevention for a Healthier America: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities*, **Trust for America's Health concluded that an investment of \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within five years. This is a return of \$5.60 for every \$1. This is the work of healthy communities and these are resources that can be directly invested in current and future job creation.**

As one of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) lead national partners for their Healthy Communities Program, we are deeply grateful that the House-passed bill allocates funding for evidence-based, community-based, disease prevention efforts, particularly for the CDC Healthy Communities program. Nationally the YMCA has facilitated 91 multidisciplinary community coalitions with the highest level of leaders. These healthy community coalitions can make healthy living and active living a reality for the communities they serve and will match the federal money with their own local investments in jobs and economic development as it relates to this work.

Community level interventions show some of the most promising approaches to attacking this national crisis of obesity and chronic disease and can lead to job creation. Likely outcomes and areas of job creation include:

- 1) Restoring physical education (PE), physical activity and recess to the school day and physical activity to afterschool child care
- 2) Starting or enhancing farmers markets and community gardens in areas lacking grocery stores or with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables
- 3) Building new sidewalks, trails and bike paths

- 4) Implementing safe routes to school strategies, such as installing crosswalks, countdown timers at crosswalks, bike lanes, accessible sidewalks, crossing guards and programs such as walking school buses.

During these difficult budget times, there is no greater challenge to the nation's economy than the cost of treating chronic disease and obesity - most of which are preventable. Chronic diseases are driving up the costs of health care and forcing companies to lay off workers. This healthy communities work not only recognizes the urgency to focus our communities on preventing these diseases and associated conditions to reduce costs, but it brings together such a diverse sector of leaders that "real change" becomes possible.

Years of research and funding have amassed a wealth of knowledge and proven strategies to increase physical activity and advance healthy eating, but to date that knowledge has not yet reached most communities across our country. We thank you for your help and support to ensure this generation of American children outlive their parents and do not suffer from the human and economic costs of chronic disease.

Please ensure the highest level of funding for the CDC Healthy Communities program in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Conference Report.

Sincerely,

Name
(List your YMCAs)

Note: This letter is going to the Hill from YMCAs across the country specifically to their members who are also conferees.