

Dear Members:

Thank you to all who have signed on to the letter for the Durbin-Sanders amendment, but if your organization has not you still have the opportunity to help. Partnership for Prevention is working hard to assure strong support for clinical and community prevention in health reform. Like you we believe real reform must be about health...not just reducing costs.

Expanding access to comprehensive, evidence-based tobacco cessation treatment is critical to putting the health into health reform. Currently, reform legislation being debated in the US Senate ("Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act") does not require coverage of tobacco cessation treatment under Medicaid. This is a serious omission as we know the smoking rate among Medicaid recipients is well above the national average.

Senators Dick Durbin (D. Ill) and Bernard Sanders (I-VT) have proposed an important amendment that would require all States to provide Medicaid recipients access to comprehensive tobacco cessation counseling and medication. Cost sharing would be prohibited. If this amendment is included in health reform, millions of current smokers will have the opportunity to successfully quit.

Our legislative team advises that the Durbin-Sanders amendment may be considered in the next few days. We plan to deliver a letter, which is below, to each Senator urging their support for the Durbin-Sanders amendment. Please join us in this effort by adding your organization's endorsement to our letter. The more organizations from across the nation expressing support for expanding tobacco cessation treatment will strengthen the prospects for success.

It is important we communicate support for the amendment quickly and we urge you to sign on by COB today. Can we include you as a supporter of the Durbin-Sanders Amendment to show how important this amendment is to our "partnership". If you would like to sign on, please email me (wtatum@prevent.org).

If you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

Thanks,

William

Dear Senator:

As Members of Partnership for Prevention, we are writing to urge you to expand coverage for tobacco cessation treatment for Medicaid recipients by supporting the Durbin-Sanders Amendment (No. 3076) to the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act."

The Durbin-Sanders amendment provides Medicaid recipients access to comprehensive tobacco cessation counseling and medication. A recent study from Massachusetts' Medicaid program confirms that making tobacco cessation available to this vulnerable population can both reduce smoking prevalence and, most important, expensive emergency room and hospital visits resulting from tobacco use. With this amendment States will have access to a much needed tool for reducing tobacco related health care costs. At a time of record budget deficits and economic uncertainty, helping states establish effective programs to help tobacco users quit is a smart, cost effective investment in healthier families and a stronger, more productive workforce.

Partnership for Prevention is a national non-profit membership organization dedicated to sound disease prevention and health promotion policies and programs. Our members include Fortune 500 companies, insurance plans, foundations, national non-profit organizations, voluntary health associations, health sector companies, and state and local health departments.

We urge your support for the Durbin-Sanders amendment. Helping smokers and other tobacco users quit is essential to controlling health care costs resulting from tobacco use; the nation's leading cause of preventable illness and premature death. To be successful in controlling the rising cost of care, health reform must be about keeping people healthy. REAL Health Reform Starts with Prevention.

Sincerely,

Partnership for Prevention