



FAITHFUL LIVING: THE IMPERATIVE OF PREVENTATIVE CARE FOR A HEALTHIER AMERICA

Leading a healthy lifestyle and caring for the sick are core values for most faith traditions. More than 90 million Americans live with chronic disease, which accounts for seven out of ten deaths in this country. Rather than concentrating primarily on treatment, we need to prevent illnesses in the first place, particularly for those most at risk. This is both sound policy and good stewardship of our nation's health care resources. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) contains important provisions that will help steer the country towards wellness and prevention.

Religious leaders have historically played a critical role in addressing the nation's social challenges, especially in protecting children, seniors and other vulnerable populations. Allowing people to lead fuller lives through the prevention of chronic disease is a natural extension of these efforts. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle allows more time to focus on family, work, hobbies, and service to others. The faith community is a powerful force in improving lives, communities, and the nation and leading and supporting prevention efforts is another powerful way to do this.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund:

The Prevention and Public Health Fund, established by the Affordable Care Act, gives us a chance to help turn our sick care system into a health care system. In fiscal year 2012, the Prevention Fund made \$1 billion available to communities in every state, and over the next 10 years (FY2013-FY2022) an additional \$12.5 billion will be added for proven, effective ways to keep Americans healthier and more productive. This is real money going to:

- Reduce tobacco use
- Expand opportunities for recreation and exercise
- Improve nutrition by increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables and farmers markets, and helping kids to eat healthier meals and snacks in schools
- Expand mental health, injury and violence prevention programs
- Improve prevention services in low-income and underserved communities

The Fund also helps state and local health departments to:

- Provide flu shots and other immunizations
- Protect our food, air, and water
- Fight infectious diseases
- Respond to natural disasters like floods and hurricanes
- Prepare for terror attacks

Moving Forward:

In the past, religious groups have led efforts supporting prevention, including tobacco cessation including Faith United Against Tobacco. For example, in 2009, national, state and local faith leaders stood united in calling on Congress to pass life-saving legislation to authorize the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to regulate tobacco products. More than 25 national denominations generated hundreds of phone calls and letters, submitted op-eds, and held press conferences across the country, including events in Arkansas, Iowa, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia.

Many faith-based organizations have already taken an active role in protecting the Prevention and Public Health Fund and its role in helping to keep Americans healthy, and improve quality of life. For example, the National Council of Jewish Women, United Church of Christ and Ascension Health have joined over 800 other groups in signing on to support the Fund.

Faith-based groups can continue to make a difference in the lives of Americans through advocating for prevention, supporting the Prevention and Public Health Fund, and helping Americans make healthier choices and take personal responsibility for their own health and the health of their families and children.

Call to Action

Please join the Trust for America's Health and nearly 800 state and national organizations in support of the Prevention and Public Health Fund. You can add your organization to the list by contacting Robyn Gougelet at rgougelet@TFAH.org