Earlier this year, we created the bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Wellness Caucus to further examine rising health care costs and the most effective ways to combat these costs through employee health and wellness initiatives.

In 2009, health care expenditures reached nearly $2.5 trillion. As tens of millions of Americans suffer from chronic disease, we know there is tremendous strain on our health care system. There are also consequences in the workforce, as we regularly hear from employers in our states and districts that America’s declining health affects worker productivity. Many employers want to support the health and wellness of their employees, but often struggle with the high cost of providing benefits.

For this reason, our caucus is taking on the challenge of sharing best practices, resources and research to help employers cost effectively and sensibly provide wellness opportunities in the workplace.

Many employers who have instituted such initiatives are already finding that workplace and community wellness programs benefit the health of employees, their families, and the employer’s bottom line in the form of reduced health care spending.

For example, Minnesota’s department of health reports that on average, employers with workplace wellness programs experience a 25 percent reduction in sick leave, health plan costs, workers compensation and disability costs.

This report features six examples of places around the country where communities and businesses have come together to provide practical ways to make healthier choices easier for employees and their families.

These stories examine how different states, cities, and towns have realized that the health of their community impacts their ability to attract and retain employers. Additionally, the stories highlight how many businesses and organizations understand the value of workplace and community wellness programs for improving productivity and reducing health spending. Though there is no one size fits all approach, this report provides concrete, successful examples that we hope will encourage further discussion and inspire steps in the right direction.

Our health is inextricably tied to our quality of life. But it is also tied to improving our country’s economic wellbeing. A continued focus on improving our nation’s health will continue to benefit families, communities, and businesses alike.

Senator Amy Klobuchar

Representative Ron Kind

Senator John Thune

Representative Erik Paulsen