



September 19, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the 4,000 members of the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE), I am writing to voice our strong opposition to the Graham-Cassidy amendment (#1030) to the American Health Care Act and any legislation that would eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund). SOPHE urges members of the Senate to work together in a transparent, bipartisan manner to ensure that all Americans have access to high quality, affordable health care, including prevention and health education services, which can help control health care costs and avoidable illnesses and injuries.

SOPHE is a 501 (c)(3) professional organization founded in 1950 to provide global leadership to the profession of health education and health promotion. SOPHE contributes to the health of all people and the elimination of health disparities through advances in health education theory and research; excellence in professional preparation and practice; and advocacy for public policies conducive to health. Collectively, SOPHE's members are employed in universities, medical/health care settings, businesses, voluntary health agencies, international organizations, and all branches of federal/state/local government.

Working on the front lines to keep children as well as seniors healthy, SOPHE members have seen firsthand the critical role of the Prevention Fund, which is the single largest investment in our nation's health. High quality preventive services help Americans stay healthy, avoid or delay onset of disease, lead productive working lives and reduce health care expenses. **Prevention has a proven return on investment: Every \$1 spent on prevention saves \$5.60 in health spending; every \$1 spent on childhood vaccines saves \$16.50 in future health care costs.** Currently, only three cents of every dollar are spent on prevention.

Prevention and quality, affordable medical care are both essential components of a high-quality health care system. Shifting funding from prevention and public health to treating disease after onset is wasteful spending, given that some 70 percent of all deaths in the United States (e.g. obesity, cancer, diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, and stroke) are preventable. These leading causes of death account for 86 percent of health care spending in the United States. The Prevention Fund supports evidence-based approaches to prevent such costly conditions through promotion of healthy eating, active living and clinical preventive services, as well as childhood immunizations. **Over the next five years alone, states stand to lose more than \$3 billion, which will result in their elimination of many chronic disease programs and erode their capacity to halt the spread of infections and epidemics.** Because of these funding cuts, we will likely see more opioid overdoses, increases in infectious disease outbreaks, more obesity in children and adults, as well as other preventable health issues.

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In addition to the profound effect on public health that elimination of the Prevention Fund would have, we are also extremely concerned about the impact of the legislation on those covered under the Medicaid program. Medicaid is an extremely cost-effective and efficient provider of health care services for low-income Americans, including 39 percent of children.

Restructuring Medicaid as proposed by the Graham-Cassidy Amendment would shift the mandated costs of providing health care coverage to States, either forcing States and local communities to increase taxes or ration or eliminate benefits for these low-income adults and children with disabilities. The bill could also eliminate protections for those with preexisting conditions subjecting them to higher premiums and ultimately leave States with higher rates of uninsured. On balance, this legislation will leave the nation both poorer and sicker.

**We strongly urge you to consider the evidence that preventing cancer and other chronic diseases is a strategic, valuable and cost-effective investment in our nation's future health and oppose any legislation that would eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund and leave millions more Americans uninsured.** America's health care system needs a solid, sustained investment in prevention to keep individuals safe and healthy while controlling health care costs.

Thank you for your consideration. As you proceed, we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Prevention Fund continues to fund new and innovative approaches to help states, localities, tribes and communities achieve better health. Please contact Dr. Cicily Hampton at ([champton@sophe.org](mailto:champton@sophe.org)) or 202-408-9804 with any additional questions.

Sincerely,



Elaine Auld, MPH, MCHES  
Chief Executive Officer