

March 4, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries:

We, the 53 undersigned organizations, would like to express our support for H.R. 766, the “Dr. Michael C. Burgess Preventive Health Savings Act,” which removes outdated statutory constraints which currently prevent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates from correctly assessing preventive health initiatives that might achieve long-term health savings in federal programs.

As leaders in health care representing patients, providers, associations, and employers, we all agree on the need for a continued focus on wellness and disease prevention if healthcare costs are to be contained. We share a bipartisan, bicameral view with many in Congress that to move forward with policy solutions to address the growing burden of long-term chronic disease, Congress needs new tools to rise above traditional legislative approaches to health care.

Simply put, we know we can’t “cut” our way to a healthier America by shaving dollars from federal programs that provide care to people in need every time Congress finds a new approach. As such, we all agree that the statutory constraints that CBO must currently follow to “score” legislation severely constrains the ability of policymakers to accurately assess legislation that would prevent chronic disease. We believe this legislation represents a significant step toward the goal of including new ideas and tactics to improve care that have proven successful in the private sector, or in health systems abroad that don’t have the same regulatory or budgetary constraints.

Chronic disease places a significant burden on our health and economy, but it can be reversed.

- We know that chronic diseases are responsible for 7 of 10 deaths among Americans each year, and they account for 90 percent of the \$4.1 trillion our nation spends annually on medical care.^[1] These figures will worsen as the population ages.
- Much of the illness, suffering, and early death related to chronic diseases is caused by modifiable health risk behaviors such as lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, tobacco use, and alcohol and substance misuse.
- Preventing or delaying the onset of new cases and mitigating the progression of chronic disease will improve the health of people in America while lowering healthcare costs and overall spending.

The current scoring process does not give Congress a complete picture of efforts to combat chronic disease.

- Research has demonstrated that certain expenditures for preventive health interventions generate savings when considered in the long term, but those cost savings may not be apparent when assessing only the first ten years—those in the “scoring” window.
- Long-term benefits from current preventive health expenditures may not be fully reflected, if at all, in cost estimates from CBO.
- Lawmakers need sound information, and today’s methods and procedures may not work as well as needed in analyzing certain efforts to prevent costly complications of chronic diseases.

CBO has already begun to examine prevention in new ways.

- In 2012, CBO published long-term estimates of the effect of a hypothetical tobacco tax on the federal budget.^[2]
- Also, in 2012, CBO published a study which found greater prescription drug access and adherence can reduce healthcare costs in other areas.^[3]
- In the 118th Congress, the House of Representatives continues to require CBO to score certain large bills by considering projected impacts on revenue and spending from assumed economic effects the bills.^[4]

The Preventive Health Savings Act will permit leaders in Congress to request that CBO estimate the long-term health savings that are possible from preventive health initiatives.

- This legislation provides that the Chairman or Ranking member of either budget or health-related committees can request an analysis of the two 10-year periods beyond the existing 10-year window.
- The bill requires CBO to conduct an initial analysis to determine whether the provision would result in substantial savings outside the normal scoring window.
 - CBO must include a description of those future-year savings in its budget projections but would retain the option of creating a formal projection that includes some or all the budgetary out years.
 - This bill is necessary to bring greater attention to the longer-term value of wellness and prevention policies specifically.
- The bill defines preventive health as an action designed to avoid future healthcare costs that are demonstrated by credible and publicly available epidemiological projection models, incorporating clinical trials or observational studies in humans.
- This narrow, responsible approach discourages abuse while encouraging a sensible review of health policies and programs Congress believes will further the public’s health.

As the chronic disease epidemic continues to worsen, so does the need for legislation that will properly allow Congress to see the full savings of enacting prevention-focused policy measures.

We applaud your efforts in sponsoring this important legislation and look forward to joining with you in transforming our nation to one that prioritizes efforts to achieve wellness and well-being for all.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Association of Clinical Endocrinology
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Lifestyle Medicine
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Society for Nutrition
Ascension
Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists
Avery's Hope
Biocom California
Blooming Health, Inc.
California Chronic Care Coalition
Caregiver Action Network
Chronic Care Policy Alliance
Connected Health Initiative
COPD Foundation
Council For Affordable Health Coverage
Determined Health
Fight Colorectal Cancer
FundPlay Foundation
Geneoscopy
Gerontological Society of America
Global Liver Institute
Healthcare Leadership Council
HealthyWomen
HIV + Hepatitis Policy Institute
Johnson & Johnson
Marshfield Clinic Health System
MemorialCare Health System
Merck
National Minority Quality Forum
Nevada Chronic Care Collaborative
NourishedRx
NTM Info & Research

Obesity Action Coalition
Obesity Medicine Association
Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease
Partnership to Fight Infectious Disease
PLAY Sports Coalition
Premier Inc.
Sports & Fitness Industry Association
Team Titin
Texas Health Resources
The Obesity Society
Tivity Health
UsAgainstAlzheimer's
Vizient
Wellvana
YMCA of the USA

[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/costs/index.htm>

[2] <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/43319>

[3] <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/43741-Medic...>

[4] <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/5/text>