



*****For Immediate Release*****

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As 'Workplace Wellness Week' Progresses, New Policies Urged to Promote Work-Based Prevention & Treatment Programs

(Washington, DC) The confluence of "National Workplace Wellness Week" with an active effort in Congress to begin considering reform of national tax policy prompted the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund this week to call on Congressional policymakers to advance innovative new tax and other measures that will incent more workplace-based programs to address obesity, a step designed to reduce the growing U.S. economic burden of the obesity epidemic.

In 2008, at the urging of the American Heart Association, Congress established the first week of April as a time to encourage the creation of worksite health promotion programs. For U.S. employers, obesity takes a tremendous toll and costs the nation \$73.1 billion per year in lost productivity among full-time workers — the equivalent of hiring 1.8 million new workers at the average American annual salary of \$42,000 — according to a 2010 Duke University study. All told, medical expenses for obese employees are 42 percent higher than for a person with a healthy weight, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

"Employer-based wellness programs have been extremely successful in bolstering employee health and company bottom lines," said Stephanie Silverman, a founding director and senior advisor to the Campaign. In 2009, 169.6 million Americans received their health insurance from employment-based coverage, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Partnership for Prevention recently reported that worksite health promotion programs result in an average of 28 percent reduction in sick days, 26 percent reduction in health costs, 30 percent reduction in workers' compensation and disability management claims and a nearly \$6-to-\$1 savings-to-cost benefit.

"These programs are working," said Silverman. "Given their returns to the economy and the dire need for efforts to help Americans reach and remain at a healthy weight, Congress should take the opportunity to assess new and innovative ways to incent companies to expand obesity-oriented wellness programs. We hope that employers will help by sharing with Congress what they need to help make that happen."

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About the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund

The Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund is dedicated to federal policy changes that can reverse one of America's costliest diseases. The Campaign convenes leaders from industry, academia, public health and associations to speak with one voice for measures to reverse the obesity epidemic and promote healthy weight in children and adults.