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Budget Committee Members Seek More Accurate, Long-Term Picture from CBO
*More than 60 Top Economists Support Bipartisan Proposal to Prompt Long-Term
Cost Analyses of U.S. Health Care Policy*

Washington, D.C. – On the eve of House action on the budget resolution, Representatives Reid Ribble (R-WI), Mark Pocan (D-WI) and other House Members proposed a standalone measure to enable Members of Congress to get a fuller picture of the costs and benefits of health care and other legislation. Currently, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) provides a 5- or 10-year assessment of the budget effects of policy proposals, limiting Congress’ understanding of how various preventive health and other measures play out economically over longer periods of time.

“A 10-year budget window is simply not capable of capturing the total benefit of federal health research and prevention programs,” said Representative Ribble. “We must ensure that those charged with estimating the impact of future health care legislation have the requisite tools to do so. Our legislation provides the necessary tools to accomplish this.”

The Ribble/Pocan proposal – called the “Long-Term Studies of Comprehensive Outcomes and Returns for the Economy Act” (or “Long-Term SCORE” Act) – would enable any Member of Congress to request a budget analysis of 50 years or longer to better understanding the economics of a policy proposal, and would prioritize long-term “scoring” within the CBO.

Immediately, 65 of the nation’s leading economists, including those affiliated with Wharton, Amherst, Princeton and Vanderbilt University, issued a statement of support, saying that the current 10-year or shorter estimates produced by CBO are “incapable of capturing both the costs and the benefits of programs extending beyond the budget window. ... [W]e support reforming the Budget Act to allow for long-term analysis of prevention policies to ensure that such policies are more accurately judged on both their costs and benefits.”

With three of every four U.S. health care dollars spent on caring for chronic conditions in the U.S. today, the proposal would enable Members of Congress to consider not only the up-front costs of programs to treat or prevent such diseases, but also the considerable economic benefits many measures may hold in years outside the traditional budget window.

A wide array of reports have demonstrated that preventing or reducing the prevalence of chronic illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, arthritis and others may offer

significant long-term savings to taxpayers. “Today, however, Congress often misses the opportunity to invest in policies that will help mitigate these costly diseases and in doing so yield substantial economic returns down the road,” said Stephanie Silverman, co-founder and Director of the CEO Action Fund. “Had Congress been able to see in 1975 that health care costs would rise nearly 40 times, and that chronic disease care would account for three out of four of every health care dollars spent, we have to believe that policy makers would have made more targeted investments in prevention and treatment policies that might have saved trillions of dollars each year,” she added.

For more information, please visit the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund’s website at www.obesityactionfund.org.

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About the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund

By bringing together leaders from across industry, academia and public health with policymakers and their advisors, the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund advocates for needed policy changes to reverse the nation’s costliest disease.