



Campaign to End Obesity Applauds Introduction of Legislation to Boost Health Outcomes for America's Seniors

Washington, D.C. – The Campaign to End Obesity today praised a bipartisan, bicameral piece of legislation designed to improve the health of Medicare beneficiaries – including those with obesity – by providing incentives to those who achieve certain health outcomes. The Better Health Rewards Program Act would create a voluntary program that would provide financial incentives for Medicare beneficiaries who achieve specific health care goals. The legislation, which was introduced in the Senate and the House of Representatives today by Sens. Wyden (D-OR) and Portman (R-OH) and by Reps. Paulsen (R-MN), Kind (D-WI), Griffin (R-AR), and Fudge (D-OH), is designed to motivate seniors to live healthy lifestyles.

The Better Health Rewards Program Act would award eligible beneficiaries who meet certain benchmarks for improving their health with a “Better Health Reward” of up to \$200 after the second year of achievement and \$400 after the third year. As participating seniors get healthy and use less healthcare services, it amounts to Medicare savings and these savings are used to fund the program.

Obesity is the leading driver for over 65 chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart and cardiovascular disease, and several cancers. Within Medicare, we know that individuals with obesity have healthcare costs that are 37.4 percent higher than normal-weight beneficiaries and more than 20 percent of all U.S. medical expenditures can be attributed to obesity – a trend that cannot continue.

Today, there are more than 15 million Medicare beneficiaries with obesity. Furthermore, we, as a nation, spend over \$200 billion annually on obesity and obesity-related healthcare costs. These costs threaten the viability of the public healthcare system. “Obesity is not only a debilitating health risk for our seniors it is also economically unsustainable for our nation.,” said Stephanie Silverman, a member of the Campaign to End Obesity’s Board of Directors. Silverman continued, “if we can prevent or provide incentives for seniors to work with clinicians to address their health-related weight challenges, we can help these seniors live better, healthier lives *and* save the nation billions of dollars in medical expenses that would otherwise be spent treating patients who suffer from obesity.”

“In an environment where reducing long-term healthcare spending is a national imperative, strategies like those encompassed in the Better Health Rewards Program Act are essential to America’s physical and fiscal health,” concluded Silverman.

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About the Campaign to End Obesity

By bringing together leaders from across industry, academia and public health with policymakers and their advisors, the Campaign to End Obesity provides the information and guidance that decision-makers need to make the changes necessary to reverse one of the nation's costliest and most prevalent diseases.