



805 15th St. NW Washington DC 20015
(202) 466 8100 ■ www.obesityactionfund.org

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Contact: Jon Sender: (202) 466-8100
Cell: (608) 235-3705

Campaign Applauds New Legislation to Boost Health for America's Seniors

Washington, D.C. – The Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund today praised the introduction of a bipartisan House bill today designed to improve the health of Medicare beneficiaries, including those with obesity, with new incentives for patients to work with providers to target improved personal health outcomes. The Better Health Rewards Program Act, introduced by U.S. Representatives Erik Paulsen (R-MN), Ron Kind (D-WI), Tim Griffin (R-AR) and Marcia Fudge (D-OH), would establish health goals for patients, using health indicators such as body mass index (BMI), diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol levels, that will encourage Medicare beneficiaries to make health improvements as well as save the Medicare program billions of dollars in medical costs. Beneficiaries who meet certain benchmarks for improving their health indicators will be eligible for a “Better Health Reward” of up to \$200 after the second year and \$400 after the third year. As participating seniors get healthy and use less healthcare services, a portion of the resultant savings provides funding for the program.

We’re excited about the introduction of the Better Health Rewards Program, said Stephanie Silverman, co-founder of the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund and a member of its Board of Directors. Between 1997 and 2006 the percentage of older Americans with obesity people rose by a third (from 21 percent to 29 percent of the Medicare population), Silverman explained, noting, “Policies like these to give our seniors tangible ways to be more actively engaged in managing their health by preventing and reversing obesity are vitally important.” The most recent national estimates show that obesity accounts for \$190.2 billion per year in medical costs, a figure that amounts to more than 21 percent of all national health care expenses,

Obesity is not only a debilitating health risk for our seniors, said Silverman, “it is also economically unsustainable for our nation. If we can prevent obesity in our seniors, or encourage them 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.”

Obesity is the leading driver for over 65 chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart and cardiovascular disease and several cancers.

The Campaign hailed the bipartisan measure as reflecting “a common interest, across the ideological spectrum, in helping Americans tackle the obesity epidemic” through thoughtful policies, particularly those that engage patients and clinicians in driving improved health outcomes.

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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.