



CAMPAIGN TO END OBESITY
ACTION FUND

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July 20, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As you continue to evaluate the nation's debt ceiling and cuts to our national spending, we are deeply concerned by recommendations presented by House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) to cap the Prevention and Public Health Fund at its current level and prohibit it from continuing its vital work. While we recognize that there are no easy solutions surrounding these negotiations, the Fund is an essential component to reigning in the profound health care costs associated with obesity and its related conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and several types of cancer. Any effort to repeal such a measure would be economically backwards.

Last year, the Congressional Budget Office reported that per capita health care spending for obese adults (as of 2007) is 38 percent greater than for adults of a "normal weight" — defined as a person with a BMI between 18.5 and 25. This constitutes a more than four-fold increase in obesity-related spending over a mere twenty-year span. Furthermore, obesity and its associated conditions cost taxpayers \$168 billion annually in medical costs alone. Additionally, according to researchers at Emory University, obesity may account for 21 percent of all health care spending by 2018. Employers alone experience a more than \$73 billion loss each year due to losses in productivity, absenteeism and medical costs attributed to obesity, according to researchers at Duke University.

Unfortunately, while recent progress to curb this epidemic has been made at the community and national levels, obesity is not yet abating. In 2010, obesity rates increased in 16 states and did not decline in any state, as shown in findings from a new report by the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Further, while only one state had an obesity rate above 30 percent four years ago, 12 states now have obesity rates above 30 percent. And, since 1995, obesity rates have climbed at least 90 percent in 17 states.

As you know, programs like the Prevention and Public Health Fund can play a direct role in helping to reverse these trends. By enabling state and local governmental agencies and community organizations to increase healthy food options in schools; create physical activity programs at the community level; and promote incentives for workplace wellness, the Fund stands to further a healthier future for the next generation — both medically and economically.

We commend your previous work to secure this Fund. Absent such reforms, obesity will continue to place an unprecedented economic strain on our nation. As you labor to find solutions that will curb national spending, we respectfully urge you to oppose any effort to eliminate or reduce the Prevention and Public Health Fund — a key tool in reducing the United States' long-term health care costs.

Sincerely,

Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Heart Association
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition
Defeat Diabetes Foundation
Directors of Health Promotion and Education
National Hispanic Medical Association
Partnership for Prevention
Public Health Foundation
Trust for America's Health
YMCA of the USA