

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

July 17, 2009

Ms. Nancy-Ann DeParle
Director, Office of Health Reform
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. Michael Hash
Senior Adviser, Office of Health Reform
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. DeParle and Mr. Hash:

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), I commend you for hosting a meeting on Thursday, June 18, 2009 with physicians to discuss how prevention and wellness initiatives can keep Americans healthy, prevent disease and illness, and lower health care costs. I am writing to ask that you now expand your focus to public health and population-based prevention, a constellation of activities that cannot be accomplished by either the medical care or health insurance systems.

NACCHO appreciates your recognition of the need for increased use of strategies to prevent disease, promote health, and reduce the nation's health care costs. However, we are concerned that the perspectives of public health professionals with practical expertise in population-based preventive interventions, including those who work in local public health departments, were not represented at the June meeting. I respectfully encourage you to conduct a "stakeholder" discussion with representatives from the public health community to exchange ideas about how we can work together to ensure that a reformed health system encompasses evidence-based public health actions that benefit all health care consumers, providers and payors by reducing the human and economic toll of preventable diseases.

NACCHO, which represents the nation's more than 2800 local health departments, is grateful for President Obama's strong, insistent support for health reform that emphasizes prevention and wellness and eliminates health inequities. When health care reform succeeds in insuring more persons for the costs of clinical services, the nation's communities will continue to be at risk for numerous health threats that can be addressed adequately only by public health experts with population-wide perspective and experience. In addition to their unique and indispensable roles in identifying and mitigating outbreaks of infectious disease, local health departments work to create the conditions that support healthy choices by individuals in areas such as diet, exercise, and tobacco use, in close partnership with elected officials, other government agencies, health care providers, and a host of community-based organizations. They also assess the health of their communities, producing the data needed to characterize health outcomes and health disparities, thereby enabling and informing quality improvement in the entire health system that serves their jurisdiction.



NACCHO strongly supports the Prevention and Wellness Trust and Prevention and Public Health Investment Fund proposed by the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, respectively. A reliable, sustained investment in public health and prevention and a skilled public health workforce is an essential cornerstone of the high-performing health system that the public expects. The nation's local health departments strongly urge the President's support for these provisions of the Senate and House bills.

I look forward to an opportunity to join a discussion with you about the roles of the governmental public health system and population-based prevention in health reform. NACCHO is deeply committed to the President's work in expanding access to health insurance, health care, and prevention to keep Americans healthy and reduce health care costs. Please do not hesitate to contact me if my organization can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Pestronk". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Robert Pestronk, MPH
Executive Director