

July 17, 2009

Letter addressed to the Chairs and Ranking Members of the following committees:

U.S. Senate:
Finance
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

U.S. House of Representatives:
Ways and Means
Energy and Commerce
Education and Labor

The undersigned organizations commend Congress and the Administration for seeking ways to extend health benefits to all Americans, and to make prevention the cornerstone of that effort. However, we are concerned that the health care needs of males, and the prostate cancer community, are not adequately addressed in the legislation currently being considered. We are also concerned that these bills appear to preempt state benefit laws that now require private insurers to provide a number of critical services, including tests for prostate cancer, the number one cancer in men.

Men's health and well-being has a crucial financial and social impact within American families and communities. This impact is highlighted by an Administration on Aging study which found that more than half the elderly widows living in poverty were not poor before the death of their husbands.¹ We also understand that health disparities exist and that Healthy People 2010 made one of its core issues the elimination of gender disparities.

Across all racial and ethnic categories, American men live less healthy lives and die younger than American women. Engaging men in health care has enormous benefits for women, children, and society.

Specifically, we encourage language within the final health reform legislation that will address these concerns:

- Current state mandates on health insurance coverage must be honored. The Essential Benefits Package as presently written (in the House bill) will offer only those preventive services actively recommended by the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). However, the USPSTF does not recommend many services now required by many different states. As just one example, at least 36 states require private insurers to cover testing for prostate cancer. The 2006 Census estimates found over 35 million men between the ages of 40 and 64 in those 36 states. Those 35 million men now have coverage for prostate cancer testing if they have health insurance. They will not be covered under the Essential Benefits Package unless state mandates are honored, and would therefore lose their right to understand their potential for risk of the most prevalent form of cancer in men
- The Senate and House bills each establish means whereby government will determine how best to proceed with prevention and wellness activities in both the private and public sectors. In making these determinations, advice will be sought by the heads of various agencies, including the Office on Women's Health.

This highlights the need for an Office on Men's Health to advise, recommend and direct wellness and prevention efforts for men and boys.

¹ Meeting the Needs of Older Women: A Diverse and Growing Population, The Many Faces of Aging, U.S. Administration on Aging. June 20, 2001

Signed:

Accelerate Progress
American Urological Association Foundation
Malecare
Men's Health Network
National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer Coalitions
Out With Cancer – The LGBT Cancer Project
Prostate Cancer International
Prostate Cancer Foundation
Prostate Conditions Education Council
Prostate Health Education Network
The Prostate Net
Us Too International
Women Against Prostate Cancer
Zero – The Project to End Prostate Cancer

State Organizations:

Alaska - Alaska Prostate Cancer Coalition
Arkansas - Arkansas Prostate Cancer Foundation
California - California Prostate Cancer Coalition
Colorado – PCEC Colorado Coalition
Connecticut - Prostate Cancer Education Forum of Connecticut
Georgia - Georgia Prostate Cancer Coalition
Hawaii - Hawaii Prostate Cancer Coalition
Kansas - Kansas Prostate Cancer Coalition
Kentucky - Kentucky Prostate Cancer Coalition
Maine - Maine Coalition to Fight Prostate Cancer
Maryland - Maryland Prostate Cancer Coalition
Michigan - Prostate Cancer Coalition of Michigan
Nevada - Nevada Prostate Cancer Task Force
New Hampshire - New Hampshire Prostate Cancer Coalition
New Jersey - Prostate Cancer Coalition of New Jersey
New York - New York State Prostate Cancer Coalition
North Carolina - Prostate Cancer Coalition of North Carolina
Pennsylvania - Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition
Pennsylvania - Obediah Cole Foundation for Prostate Cancer
Texas - Texas Prostate Cancer Coalition
Virginia - Virginia Prostate Cancer Coalition
West Virginia - Dan Blue Prostate Cancer Foundation