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Coalition Cheers First-in-the-Nation State Prevention Fund
Measure in health care payment reform bill aims to reduce spending on costly diseases

Boston, MA – A coalition of health care and public health leaders applauded the inclusion of a new $60 million Prevention and Wellness Trust in the health care payment reform released today by a Conference Committee.

Maddie Ribble, Policy Director at the Massachusetts Public Health Association said: “The bill is truly groundbreaking and keeps Massachusetts at the forefront of health policy. We are taking a major step away from a costly sick care system and toward an integrated approach focused on keeping people healthy. We applaud Senate President Murray, Speaker DeLeo, Chairman Walsh, Chairman Moore, and all the members of the conference committee for their commitment and hard work.”

The Prevention and Wellness Trust will allow communities to implement proven strategies to combat the health conditions that are driving up our health care costs – conditions like diabetes, heart disease and asthma. Effective prevention programs can save money and reduce health care premiums for businesses and families.

BACKGROUND

- The Prevention Trust Coalition includes: Massachusetts Public Health Association, Health Care For All, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, Health Resources in Action, the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action, and the Boston Public Health Commission.
- The Trust – based on standalone legislation filed by Sen. Harriette Chandler and Rep. Jason Lewis – is a critical component of payment reform. It will allow municipalities and community organizations to develop and implement proven public health programs that will prevent...
residents from developing costly, preventable diseases, saving money for the state, businesses, and families.

- In Massachusetts, we spend nearly $70 billion on health care costs, yet rates of costly and preventable health conditions continue to rise, and health inequities based on race, income, and geography persist.
- We spend roughly 97% of our health care dollars caring for individuals once they’ve already become sick, and only 3% of our health care dollars on preventing diseases from developing in the first place.
- Spending on chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension and asthma – many of which are preventable - currently makes up 75% of the state’s health care expenditures.
- A 2011 Urban Institute study concluded that by reducing the prevalence of diabetes and hypertension in Massachusetts by just 5%, we could achieve significant savings right away: $135 million within 1-2 years and $450 million within 5 years.
- Urban Institute Senior Fellow Dr. Brenda Spillman has stated that if effective community prevention programs were put in place now, medical care costs in Massachusetts could be reduced by nearly $3 billion over the next decade.
- Examples of community-based prevention include:
  - Home-based programs to reduce indoor asthma triggers
  - Serving healthier foods in schools and child care centers
  - Interventions to reduce youth and adult tobacco use
  - Improving access to sidewalks and bicycles lanes to encourage physical activity

Creating a dedicated source of funding for prevention has received wide support from elected officials and leaders in business and health care. Last fall, over 300 civic leaders signed on to a letter calling for the inclusion of dedicated disease prevention funding in the next phase of health reform. 95 state representatives and senators have supported the measure.

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