



Health Resources in Action
Advancing Public Health and Medical Research



**Legislation to Create Prevention and Cost Control Trust
Endorsed by Public Health Committee;
Advocates Eye Inclusion in Payment Reform Bill
July 12, 2011**

On July 12, the Joint Committee on Public Health reported favorably on legislation that would support a robust system of community-based prevention to address costly and preventable health conditions. The bill, House 1498, sponsored by Representative Jason Lewis, seeks to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

The bill would create a "Prevention and Cost Control Trust" funded by a small assessment on health safety net surcharge payers, with the funds used to support evidence-based strategies to prevent diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and other costly health conditions.

"The opportunity that we have before us today – to enact comprehensive payment reform that emphasizes prevention and wellness, instead of just disease treatment – may not come again for decades," said Representative Lewis.

A coalition of organizations comprised of the Massachusetts Public Health Association, Health Care for All, the Boston Public Health Commission, and Health Resources in Action applauded the committee's action. "We thank Chairman Sanchez, Chairwoman Fargo, and all the members of the Public Health Committee for their vision and dedication," said Valerie Bassett, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Public Health Association. "Today, they have moved forward one of the critical pieces of successful payment reform."

"Every year, we spend most of our health care dollars caring for individuals once they've already become sick, and only three percent of our health care dollars on preventing diseases from developing in the first place," said House Committee Chairman Jeffrey Sánchez. "If we're serious about getting a handle on runaway healthcare costs, we have to change this."

"Community based prevention in our schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods will prevent or reduce illness and injury before they happen, saving us the costs of treatment as well as untold human suffering," said Senate Committee Chairwoman Susan Fargo.

The coalition cited rising medical costs as one reason they are pushing House 1498. A January, 2011 study published in the American Journal of Public Health found that a mere 5% reduction in the costs of treating diabetes and hypertension will save the Commonwealth nearly \$500 million each year.

The coalition members said they would seek to have the bill included in any payment reform legislation that emerges. Amy Whitcomb Slemmer, Executive Director of Health Care For All and a convener of the Campaign for Better Care said, “Support for prevention programs is one of our key priorities for payment reform. From a consumer perspective, staying healthy in the first place is the best way to reduce premiums and out of pocket costs.”

Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Executive Director of the Boston Public Health Commission, said, “Effective community-based prevention programs work with neighborhood leaders and residents to create healthy housing, safe streets, walkable and bikeable roadways, and improved access to healthy foods for residents.”

“We have the evidence and we have the experience to implement effective programs to keep people safe and healthy, while reducing medical expenditures,” said Ray Considine, President of Health Resources in Action, “The Prevention and Cost Control Trust will put the resources behind the evidence.”

For more information, contact Maddie Ribble, Massachusetts Public Health Association: 617-524-6696 x111, mribble@mphaweb.org.

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More About the Coalition Partners

- **The Massachusetts Public Health Association** is a statewide membership organization of people working to protect the health and safety of all our Commonwealth’s residents. MPHA is working for a healthy Massachusetts by promoting laws, policies, and programs that protect the health of our families, communities, and workplaces.
- **Health Resources in Action** has been a leader in developing programs that advance public health and medical research for over fifty years. Through Community Health and Medical Foundation divisions, we work with governments, communities, scientists, and nonprofit organizations that share an imperative for resolving today’s most critical public health issues through policy, research, prevention, and health promotion.
- **Health Care For All** seeks to create a consumer-centered health care system that provides comprehensive, affordable, accessible, culturally competent, high quality care and consumer education for everyone, especially the most vulnerable. We work to achieve this as leaders in public policy, advocacy, education and service to consumers in Massachusetts.
- **The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC)** is the health department for the City of Boston and an independent public agency providing a wide range of health services and programs. The mission of BPHC is to protect, promote, and preserve the health and wellbeing of all Boston residents, particularly the most vulnerable.