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In Advance of Committee Hearing, Health Policy Leaders Bring Attention To Importance Of Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund to Achieving State’s Health Care Goals

Tomorrow morning, the Joint Committee on Public Health will hold an informational hearing on the Massachusetts Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund (PWTF). The Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund is a first-in-the-nation effort to bring proven public health prevention programs to scale in order to reduce the rates of preventable health conditions and to eliminate inequities in health outcomes.

We have come together as statewide health policy leaders to call attention to the important role of PWTF as part of our state’s multi-pronged approach to improving health outcomes, addressing health care costs, and combatting alarming health inequities across race, ethnicity, and income.

The Prevention and Wellness Trust Fund is the first large-scale effort in the state linking clinical treatment and screening to community disease prevention programs and connecting resources across clinical, community, and municipal partners. The Fund supports nine regional partnerships which represent areas of the state with high burdens of preventable health conditions and significant concentrations of the state’s low income residents and residents of color. PWTF-supported services are available to nearly one million Massachusetts residents who live in these partnership regions.

PWTF aims to address the underlying social and economic conditions that drive poor health outcomes. In the first 3 years of the program, PWTF has invested in the essential infrastructure at the community level to seamlessly coordinate clinical and community services for residents, made nearly 9,000 referrals to community services, and laid the groundwork for even greater impact on community health in future years.

The focus of PWTF on preventing costly health conditions and addressing the underlying causes of poor health is an essential complement to ongoing health care transformation efforts. Initiatives to advance accountable care
organizations, develop alternative payment methodologies, support a system of care in community settings, and address price variation across provider types all represent vital areas of health policy that we must continue to aggressively pursue as a Commonwealth. But without the large-scale focus on addressing the underlying causes of poor health though the Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund, these efforts cannot be successful at achieving their goals.

Under the provisions of Chapter 224, funding for PWTF will sunset on June 30, 2017. Given the importance of this program, it is essential that we come together to ensure that the program continues into the future. We call on everyone who cares about a vibrant, healthy, and equitable Massachusetts to join together with us in this goal.

Signed,

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