

Open Letter to Massachusetts Legislative Leaders
**Reauthorization of Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund Key to Addressing Poor Health,
Supporting Successful Health System Transformation**

October 27, 2016

Senate President Stanley Rosenberg
State House, Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo
State House, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Senate President Rosenberg and Speaker DeLeo:

Since the passage of the last major health reform legislation in Massachusetts in 2012 (Chapter 224), the Commonwealth has staked out new and aggressive strategies to improve health outcomes, address health care costs, and combat alarming health inequities across race, ethnicity, and income. **The Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund (PWTF), established in Chapter 224, is a key part of our state's multi-pronged approach, investing in evidence-based community interventions that help to keep residents healthy and safe.** PWTF – the first program of its kind in the country – has been recognized as a national model by other states, national health care and public health organizations, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

PWTF-supported services are available to nearly one million Massachusetts residents who live in all regions of the state. This number could grow in the future, impacting even more residents. In the first 3 years of the program, PWTF has invested in nine partnerships across the Commonwealth, which have built the essential infrastructure to seamlessly link clinical services, community interventions, and municipal health resources. Nearly 12,000 referrals to community services have been made for interventions which are not covered by health insurance, and PWTF partnerships are laying the groundwork now for even greater impact on the health of our communities in future years.

Under the provisions of Chapter 224, funding for PWTF will sunset in June 2017. Given the importance of this program, **we urge you to support a reauthorization of the Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund before this deadline.**

Rates of chronic health conditions such as diabetes and asthma – many of which are preventable – continue to rise, consuming 86% of our national health care costs. The result is shorter lives, lower quality of life, reduced workplace productivity, and missed school days, which hamper children’s educational achievement. Preventable chronic conditions affect all areas of the state, but disproportionately impact communities of color and low income communities, representing a fundamental barrier to equity in our Commonwealth. **Tackling these challenges requires more than just good clinical care – it depends on a robust investment in community-based prevention such as the Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund.**

The PWTF focus on underlying causes of poor health is an essential complement to ongoing health care transformation efforts. There are many areas of health policy that we should aggressively pursue in order to improve the delivery and payment of health services, including a shift to accountable care organizations and addressing price variation among providers. **But without the large-scale focus on underlying causes of poor health through the Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund, these efforts cannot be successful at achieving their goals.**

We ask for your partnership to continue the important and groundbreaking work of the Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund. We believe a thorough conversation is needed about the appropriate structure and funding for the PWTF, and we stand ready to work with you to identify the best option for the Commonwealth.

Signed,

(see signatories on following pages)

cc: Senate Majority Leader Harriette Chandler
House Majority Leader Ronald Mariano
Chairwoman Karen Spilka, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Chairman Brian Dempsey, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means
Chairman James Welch, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
Chairman Jeffrey Sánchez, House Chair, Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
Chairman Jason Lewis, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health
Chairwoman Kate Hogan, House Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health

Signed,

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