



## Regarding Early White House Health Reform Efforts

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The White House Forum on Health Reform highlighted the commitment of the Administration to address the growing health care crisis. By inviting a broad array of interested and influential parties to the White House, the President and his senior staff were able to feel and understand the call for reform coming from “the bottom up, from all across the spectrum — from doctors, nurses and patients; unions and businesses; hospitals, health care providers and community groups.”

While the President’s introductory remarks to the group are punctuated with references to the “exploding cost of health care in America today,” he also noted that there must be investment in prevention. What is often lost is the fact that what is meant by prevention is not always clear. And, there are different types of prevention. Early disease testing is prevention that is dependent on the medical system to deliver. Smoking cessation, weight control and stress management are much more complex behavioral types of prevention requiring, knowledge and education, community and environment support, and personal responsibility. Effectively implementing this type of comprehensive lifestyle and behavioral health care goes beyond the current medical system and will not be addressed by increased access, coverage and payment under the current system.

In the Wellness Initiative for the Nation (WIN), we call upon the Administration and Congress to place high emphasis on prevention, health promotion and integrative health care. True prevention and health promotion require something different than just access to current services. A new vision of health and disease based on the primary components of health flourishing is required. WIN also emphasizes the essential step of creating within the White House environment an Executive office to focus specifically on developing policies and programs for lifestyle-based chronic disease prevention and management, integrative health care practices and health promotion.

Without such a high level commitment, my fear is that efforts to create long-term, sustainable health and wellness will be lost in the scramble to preserve and expand access to the status quo. Without a substantial wellness focus, the Nation will be destined to our system that costs too much and is delivering less health and little care to fewer people.”

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