



November 15, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander:

As the Committee prepares to hold a hearing on healthy communities, the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) welcomes the opportunity to share our thoughts with you.

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. It is the exclusive forum for the nation's healthcare leaders to jointly develop policies, plans, and programs to achieve their vision of a 21st century healthcare system that makes affordable, high-quality care accessible to all Americans. Members of HLC – hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, pharmacies, post-acute care providers, and information technology companies – advocate for measures to increase the quality and efficiency of healthcare.

HLC's Work on Community Health

HLC members strongly believe in the importance of wellness and preventive health programs. It is estimated that in 2030, the number of people with 3 or more chronic diseases will reach 83.4 million.¹ Many of these diseases are caused by modifiable health risk behaviors such as lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use. To avoid these risks, Americans need access to comprehensive and evidence-based wellness programs in the community that educate them on making healthy choices. HLC's member companies are at the forefront of developing and implementing these programs, and examples can be seen in HLC's compendium, "Vlable Solutions: Private Sector Programs and Collaborations to Enhance Care Delivery."²

¹ Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease, "What is the Impact of Chronic Disease on America?"

http://www.fightchronicdisease.org/sites/default/files/pfcd_blocks/PFCD_US.FactSheet_FINAL1%20%282%29.pdf

² Healthcare Leadership Council, "Vlable Solutions: Private Sector Programs and Collaborations to Enhance Care Delivery." <https://www.hlc.org/app/uploads/2017/01/20170113-HLC-Vlable-Solutions-Compendium-vFinal-Updated-Electronic.pdf>

HLC also promotes community-based wellness programs through its *Wellness Frontiers Award*, which recognizes best practices and draws attention to initiatives that demonstrate excellence and quality. The award-winning programs are cost-effective, evidence-based, replicable, and produce measurable results. A list of the award recipients can be found at <https://www.hlc.org/program/wellness-frontiers-award/>.

HLC's Recommendations

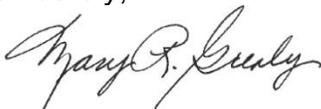
HLC was proud to support Dr. Adams' nomination as Surgeon General, and looks forward to working with him in support of healthy communities. The Surgeon General plays an important role in educating Americans about wellness. HLC urges Dr. Adams and the Committee to work to develop the community infrastructure needed to support health, including access to physical activity and exercise, healthy foods, and safe housing. These programs need to reach all communities, especially those in underserved and low-income areas.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) play a critical role in addressing the health needs of communities. CHWs specialize in working with low-income, minority, disenfranchised, and underserved communities. CHWs are members of these communities and spend time with patients in the community and in their homes. CHWs therefore have a unique understanding of their patients' needs and are able to address social determinants of health by linking patients to the support and social services they need to become, and stay, healthy. HLC recommends the Committee support the increased use of CHWs.

HLC is a strong proponent of the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), which for people with prediabetes has been shown to reduce the risk of developing diabetes by 58% through the use of a community-based lifestyle change program. HLC is pleased that this program will be expanded to Medicare in 2018, which will help ensure that seniors are able to make informed healthy choices to prevent the onset of diabetes. We encourage the Committee to consider the DPP as a model for other community-based interventions on chronic disease.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. HLC looks forward to continuing to work with the Committee to better the health of communities. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Withey at (202) 449-3435.

Sincerely,



Mary R. Grealy
President