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April 22, 2012

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Lung Association, I am writing to state our opposition to HR 1549, the "Helping Sick Americans Act." Our organization has long fought for expanded access to health care for Americans living with pre-existing conditions, including lung diseases, but the American Lung Association strongly opposes using the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund) to pay for it. The American Lung Association has repeatedly stated our support for the Prevention Fund and our fierce opposition to any attempts to divert or use these dollars for any purposes other than what was originally intended in the Affordable Care Act – which in part is to prevent and better manage devastating chronic diseases.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), chronic diseases account for 75 percent of all health care costs. Investments must be made to prevent chronic disease and the Prevention and Public Health Fund is already helping Americans across the country to make healthier choices and take responsibility for their own health and the health of their families. Because of the Prevention Fund, states and communities are now able to help more people quit smoking through smoking cessation programs and improve lung health by preventing and treating lung diseases, including lung cancer, COPD, and asthma. The Prevention Fund is also allowing states and communities to monitor outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as influenza, and enhance prevention services in low-income and underserved communities.

Tobacco-related diseases are the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing over 443,000 Americans each year. Smoking alone costs the U.S. economy \$193 billion dollars each year, \$96 billion in direct health care costs and \$97 billion in lost productivity. The first round of CDC's *Tips from Former Smokers* media campaign, which aired in 2012 and was paid for by the Prevention Fund, resulted in hundreds of thousands of additional calls to 1-800-QUIT NOW and visits to [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov) by smokers seeking help in quitting. CDC began re-airing the *Tips* ads in March 2013, and calls to 1-800-QUIT-NOW doubled in a majority of states. Earlier this month, new and extremely powerful ads in the *Tips* series began to air. The response from smokers seeking help to quit is tangible evidence of the Fund having a positive impact.

Studies show prevention can work and that investing in tobacco control programs save money *and* lives. Last year, a study conducted by economists

at George Washington University found that every \$1 invested in Massachusetts' comprehensive Medicaid quit smoking program saved \$3 – in just over one year. Another study found that Washington state saved \$5 for every \$1 invested in comprehensive tobacco control programs from 2000-2009. In sum, prevention works, it saves lives and saves money.

Using the Prevention Fund to pay for HR 1549 is short-sighted. Such cuts will endanger the health and wellness of those in your communities as critical public health programs and services are put in jeopardy, which will lead to greater health care costs. The American Lung Association asks for your opposition to HR 1549.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold Wimmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Harold Wimmer  
National President and CEO