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US SENATE INTRODUCES BILL TO TRAIN MORE PREVENTIVE MEDICINE DOCTORS

Preventive medicine physicians are on the frontlines of America's emerging health threats

Washington, D.C., April 16, 2007 – U.S. Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), and Joe Lieberman (I-CT) joined together today to take a major step toward stemming the tide of America's eroding preventive medicine and public health workforce. Their landmark bill, the Preventive Medicine and Public Health Training Act, introduced in Congress today, will ensure the nation has a continuous supply of highly trained preventive medicine and public health physicians to lead the efforts to promote health and protect all Americans from today's ever growing public health threats.

This is an especially critical measure as baby boomers approach retirement in greater numbers than ever before, obesity plagues young and old alike, emerging and re-emerging infections become harder to treat, and Americans face imminent threats to their health and well-being from around the globe.

The bill will provide the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the necessary funds to train highly specialized public health physicians in the skills necessary to lead pandemic flu planning, bio-terrorism surveillance, chronic disease prevention, quality improvement and safety in the health care system, and health promotion at both the patient and population levels.

"Preventive medicine physicians – the only U.S. physicians trained in both clinical medicine and public health – are uniquely equipped to address the health needs of individuals and populations alike," said Dr. Michael Parkinson, president of the American College of Preventive Medicine. "We applaud this bi-partisan group of health care leaders for their foresight in protecting the nation's health."

A TROUBLESOME TREND

Preventive medicine's mission is to protect, promote, and maintain health and well-being while preventing disease, disability, and premature death. This is becoming increasingly more difficult as the number of preventive medicine physicians decreases.

"Preventive medicine physicians represent an underutilized and increasingly threatened resource to meet the nation's health and health care needs," said Dr. Parkinson.

In 1998, there were 90 preventive medicine training programs in the U.S. training 420 physicians. Today, there are only 76 programs training an all time low of 364 physicians. At the same time as this decrease, the Health Resources and Services Administration estimates

that between the years 2000 and 2010 the demand for public health professionals will grow at twice the rate of all other occupations in the U.S.

"This decrease in the number of preventive medicine physicians represents a perfect storm of an aging public health workforce, decreased funds for training, fewer training programs, and fewer medical residents choosing to specialize in preventive medicine," said Dr. Parkinson.

"Inadequate funding means that many who choose this specialty must dig into their own pockets to receive the specialty training the federal government assures at no cost to all other medical residents," he said. "The current system has built-in disincentives to dedicating one's career to public health. This bill will change that."

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ABOUT THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

The American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) is the national medical specialty society representing physicians committed to health promotion and disease prevention. Founded in 1954, ACPM provides leadership in research, professional education, development of public policy, and enhancement of standards of preventive medicine. ACPM members include physicians board-certified in preventive medicine and in other medical specialties who have a strong interest in health promotion and disease prevention. For more information about ACPM, visit www.acpm.org.