

Media Contact:
Dan Lavoie
dan@policylink.org
510.418.1208

Leading Health Foundations Say Prevention is Vital to Health Systems Reform

*Letter signed by leaders of six major foundations says prevention measures must
be “scaled up”*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY – Leaders of six of the nation’s top health foundations today made an unprecedented joint call for prevention measures to be central to the reform of our national health systems.

In a [letter released today](#), leaders at **The California Endowment, The Kresge Foundation, Nemours, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Kaiser Permanente**, wrote that prevention measures like early health screenings and improved access to healthy food will save both lives and money. Good health, they argue, doesn’t start at the doctor’s office – it starts where we live, work, learn and play.

Beginning in 2006, the six foundations, along with technical advisor Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, partnered to form the [Healthy Eating Active Living Convergence Partnership](#) – a collaboration of funders looking to help healthy people live in healthy places. Today’s letter was released on behalf of the Partnership.

In the letter, the foundation leaders point to several proven examples where community-level prevention measures improved health, saved money, and cultivated community leadership.

“This is a strong national platform for the nation to build on,” they write in the letter, available in full at www.convergencepartnership.org. “With additional resources, it could bring considerable improvements in health for all Americans. It is time to scale up these efforts by including robust financial support for community prevention in any health systems reform.”

The letter’s signatories are:

- **Robert K. Ross, MD, President and CEO;**
The California Endowment
- **Raymond J. Baxter, PhD, Senior Vice President**
Kaiser Permanente
- **Rip Rapson, CEO**
The Kresge Foundation
- **David J. Bailey, MD; CEO and President; Nemours**
- **Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA; President**
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- **Sterling K. Speirn; CEO**
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The letter is released at a crucial time, as Americans and Congress debate how to reform our national health care system.

The foundation leaders stress that prevention can save money and improve the long-term population health. A study last year from the Trust for America's Health showed that for every dollar we invest in proven community-based disease prevention programs, we save \$5.60. If we invested \$10 per person in prevention, we could yield savings of more than \$16 billion nationwide annually within five years.

The American people also want a health care system built around smart prevention measures. A recent Greenberg Poll showed prevention was the most popular potential health care fix, with nearly half of respondents rating it a 10 out of 10 in terms of importance.

Successful programs highlighted in the letter include:

- In Bakersfield, Calif., a small group of local mothers – many of them Spanish-speaking farm workers – formed a walking group to improve their fitness and build community. With the help of police, parks officials, and the local Chamber of Commerce, the group cleaned up a long-neglected park and reported meaningful improvements in their health.
- In Somerville, Mass., the citywide Shape Up Somerville campaign helped bring the city healthier school food, safer routes to school, farmers markets, community gardens, and more nutritional restaurant options. Weight gain among first- through third-graders has already slowed.
- In Delaware, the statewide Make Delaware's Kids the Healthiest in the Nation campaign ensured that policies and practices in early education focus on healthy eating and physical activity as part of a comprehensive approach to positively impact childhood obesity where children live, learn, and play. For every dollar invested in the initiative, Delaware saw a \$4 savings in healthcare costs.

“Over time,” the foundation leaders wrote, “a focus on community prevention will improve health, save money, reduce demands on our health system and, most important, lead to a nation of healthier people and healthier places to live.”

About The Convergence Partnership

In 2006, a collaboration of funders came together to create the Healthy Eating Active Living Convergence Partnership, with the shared goal of changing policies and environments to better achieve the vision of healthy people living in healthy places. The steering committee includes representatives from The [California Endowment](#), [Kaiser Permanente](#), [Nemours](#), [The Kresge Foundation](#), the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#), and the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention serve as critical technical advisors on the committee. [PolicyLink](#), a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity, serves as program directors for the partnership. [Prevention Institute](#), a national non-profit organization dedicated to improving community health and equity through effective primary prevention, provides policy research and analysis along with strategic support.

For more information, please visit www.convergencepartnership.org