

August 13, 2013

The Honorable Ami Bera, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
1408 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Dr. Bera,

The Affordable Care Act's (ACA) preventive service coverage provisions hold great promise in improving women's health. The undersigned national medical provider and public health organizations committed to women's health support legislation you've introduced, H.R. 2457, the Women's Preventive Health Awareness Campaign Act, to help patients know about, and providers deliver, this important promise.

Preventive care can save lives, improve health outcomes, and reduce medical costs. Well-woman visits are basic to women's preventive health care, and include prevention, primary care, and early disease detection. However, high out-of-pocket costs, a lack of awareness regarding preventive services, and confusion arising from changing medical guidelines have resulted in too many women receiving inadequate or inappropriate preventive care.

Today, too many women forego critical or even lifesaving health screenings. The proportion of women in the United States aged 22-30 who have never had a Pap test increased from 6.6% in 2000 to 9% in 2010.ⁱ Mammography rates among women age 50 to 64 declined from about 79% to 73%.ⁱⁱ At the same time, many women get care they don't need, increasing health care costs. The growing discrepancy between preventive services accessed and preventive services needed underscores the need for your legislation.

The ACA helps eliminate the cost barrier and mandates insurance coverage of a comprehensive package of women's health care services, including well-woman visits, mammograms, pap tests, and counseling and screening for sexually transmitted infections. What patients and providers need now is clear information about these important changes. With heart disease being the leading cause of death in American women, screening for physical and behavioral risk-factors and making necessary referrals as part of regular well woman visits are critically important.ⁱⁱⁱ More than one third of women in the United States have experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their lifetime, and the well woman visit also presents a key opportunity to provide screening and counseling and make needed referrals.^{iv}

Your bill's creation of a federal awareness campaign will help ensure women have clear information about the preventive services they need to remain healthy and help providers work with their patients to optimize their health. This is the right initiative at the right time. We applaud your foresight, leadership, and commitment to improving women's health and ensuring we get the most for our Nation's health care dollars.

We look forward to working with you on passage.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American College of Osteopathic Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association

American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychological Association
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

ⁱ American Cancer Society. Cancer Prevention & Early Detection Facts & Figures, 2012. American Cancer Society, 2012.

ⁱⁱ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2013. Cervical Cancer Screening Among Women Aged 18–30 Years — United States, 2000–2010. 61(51); 1038-1042.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Women and Heart Disease Fact Sheet, http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_women_heart.htm

^{iv} Black MD et al, MR. 2011. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.