

HOW TO BUILD WEALTH IN AMERICA

An Open Letter to Presidential Candidates from America's Top Health Economists

Dear Presidential Candidates,

Chronic disease has a direct impact on the wealth of America: health is wealth, and chronic disease costs American society immensely. Our nation's leaders have a viable, profound opportunity to build wealth by improving health.

Seven out of ten American deaths are due to chronic diseases such as COPD, heart disease and cancer. One in two Americans lives with at least one chronic condition.ⁱ Nearly half of U.S. adults have diabetes or pre-diabetesⁱⁱ – more than double the number just thirty years ago.ⁱⁱⁱ Rising rates of chronic disease do not only affect adults. In fact, fueled by the obesity epidemic, the prevalence of type 2 diabetes among American children age 19 and younger grew by 30 percent from 2001-2009.^{iv}

Treating people with chronic conditions accounts for 86 percent of the nearly \$3 trillion we spend on health care a year.^v Alzheimer's disease and dementia alone currently cost \$200 billion per year – and this is expected to double by 2040.^{vi} The implications for public spending are striking: within Medicare, people with multiple chronic conditions account for 93 percent of total spending.

Moreover, the direct health care costs associated with chronic disease are only a slice of the problem. Chronic illnesses, including behavioral health conditions, directly affect the U.S. economy through lost productivity, missed work days, disability, and premature death. Today, nearly one in two working age adults age 45 to 64 have more than one chronic condition.^{vii} Cardiovascular disease alone was projected to cost America \$216 billion in lost productivity in 2015; if current trends continue, this is projected to increase to \$304 billion per year by 2030.^{viii}

But perhaps the most important – and unmeasured – costs of chronic disease are the hardships caused by instances of avoidable disability and loss of life that disrupt families, burden caregivers, and exact a personal toll on those who lose loved ones. The value to American society of reducing the impact of chronic disease far exceeds the costs of health care and reduced productivity.

Determining the most effective strategy and allocation of resources to reduce the burden of chronic disease is a challenge, but the potential payoff is immense. Reducing mortality from heart disease or cancer by just one percent is worth as much as \$628 billion dollars – over 3.5 percent of annual GDP.^{ix} Our next President should seize the opportunity to reset the agenda and generate American **wealth** by promoting Americans' **health**.

Sincerely,

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This letter is signed by the individuals listed in his or her personal capacity. The opinions expressed are the signers' own and do not reflect the view of the organization(s) with which that individual is affiliated. Signing the letter does not express or imply support for the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease or its policies.

ⁱCDC, Chronic Disease Overview. ⁱⁱMenke A, Casagrande S, Geiss L, Cowie CC. Prevalence of and Trends in Diabetes Among Adults in the United States, 1988-2012. JAMA. 2015; 314(10):1021-1029. ⁱⁱⁱElvin E, Parrinello CM, Sacks DB, Coresh J. Trends in Prevalence and Control of Diabetes in the United States, 1988-1994 and 1999-2010. Annals of Internal Medicine. 2014; 160(8):517-525. ^{iv}Dabelea D, Mayer-Davis E, et al. Prevalence of Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes Among Children and Adolescents from 2001 to 2009. JAMA. 2014; 311(17):1178-1186. ^vCDC, Chronic Disease Overview; CMS, National Health Expenditure Data, 2014. ^{vi}Hurd MD, Martorell P, Delavande A, Mullen KJ, Langa KM. Monetary Costs of Dementia in the United States. New England Journal of Medicine. 2013; 368(14): 1326-1334. ^{vii}AHRO, Multiple Chronic Conditions Chartbook: 2010 MEPS Data. ^{viii}Heidenreich PA, Trogdon JG, et al. AHA Policy Statement: Forecasting the Future of Cardiovascular Disease in the United States: A Policy Statement From the American Heart Association. Circulation. 2011;123:933-944 (Figures adjusted to 2015 USD). ^{ix}Murphy KM, Topel RH. The Value of Health and Longevity. Journal of Political Economy. 2006; 114(5): 871-904 (figures adjusted to 2015 USD); 2014 World Bank Data: United States.



PARTNERSHIP TO FIGHT CHRONIC DISEASE

Learn about PFCD's solution to the chronic disease crisis at FightChronicDisease.org/public-policy-platform