

Media Talking Points for Letters to the Editor or Op-eds

Desired Frame: Preventive medicine is clearly important, but the most effective prevention happens outside a doctor's office. It saves lives and it saves money.

Several articles, like [this one](#) in Fortune magazine, refer to prevention only in the clinical context and then dismiss it as not cost-saving.

Talking points for a response letter:

- *Community* prevention works by preventing disease *before it occurs*, keeping people out of the doctor's office in the first place.
- Investment in community prevention keeps people healthy and reduces unnecessary healthcare costs.

Here is a sample letter to the editor, submitted by Prevention Institute in response to the Fortune article:

Matt Miller too easily dismisses the proven power of prevention to cut costs and save lives. He knows that the impact could be profound but laments that it's a long way off. But if not now, when? We need more than tinkering at the edges. Preventive medicine is necessary but not sufficient. Community prevention, absent from Mr. Miller's commentary, works by preventing disease before it occurs, keeping people out of the doctor's office in the first place. In order for health reform to succeed, it must include the same kind of community prevention strategies, such as those used to reduce smoking, that have historically documented cost savings and will contain skyrocketing chronic disease rates – and costs.

Desired Frame: Healthy people live in healthy communities

Several articles, like [this one](#) in the Boston Globe, present the view that the health reform bill should not include investments in infrastructure, such as parks, walking paths, or farmers' markets. These articles reflect elements of opposition in Congress to investment in health infrastructure; critics have labeled proposed investment in community prevention as the "jungle-gym provision."

Talking points for a response letter:

- The built environment affects our health. By investing in the infrastructure to create healthy communities – the places that people live, learn, work, and play -- we can prevent disease *before it occurs*.
- Community prevention works: efforts to prevent disease and injury in the first place have been shown to improve community health and increase health equity.
- In fact, health reform may fail if we do *not* invest in the community prevention initiatives that keep people healthy and out of the doctor's office in the first place.

Desired Frame: Our leaders have a duty to be sure prevention is part of health reform.

Some articles take the position that skyrocketing health care costs are the result of individuals making unhealthy lifestyle choices and indicate that health reform will fail unless individuals start “taking responsibility for their health.”

Talking points for a response letter:

- Behaviors and health outcomes are shaped by the environment around us. By investing in the creation of healthy communities – the places that people live, learn, work, and play – we can prevent disease *before it occurs*.

Desired Frame: Community prevention works and must be included in health reform.

Some articles understand the value of community prevention and push for its inclusion in health reform. [This sound bite](#) from NPR’s Weekend Edition and [this blog post](#) from the Huffington Post both provide examples of the kind of framing that we want to reinforce. When writers do a good job making the case for prevention, let them know!

Talking points for a response letter:

- Efforts to prevent disease and injury in the first place have been shown to improve community health, save lives, and increase health equity, reducing unnecessary health care costs.
- There are many examples of successful community prevention strategies.
 - *This is an opportunity to highlight examples of community prevention efforts in your own community. Discuss specific community prevention initiatives with a variety of health emphases, including physical activity, nutrition, air quality, traffic safety, worksite wellness, and violence prevention. A sample sentence follows.*
 - In Oakland, schools are unlocking their gates so children have safe places to play. A small investment in lighting will mean that children can play in the winter, families have places to walk, and neighbors will feel safer and connected to each other. The lights will improve the health of everyone who lives here.