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.¹ Nearly half of U.S. adults have diabetes or pre-diabetes—two more than the number just thirty years ago.² 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 19 years and younger grew by 30 percent from 2001-2009.³

Treating people with chronic conditions accounts for 86 percent of the nearly $3 trillion we spend on health care a year.⁴ A recent study from the Brookings Institution on Medicare costs, which are expected to double, found that Medicare spending will increase by 10 percent in 2014.⁵ Medicare covers chronic care patients and those who are hospitalized, yet it does not cover the costs of long-term care.⁶ Spending on chronic care accounts for 33 percent of Medicare spending, or $229 billion, in 2014.⁷

Moreover, the direct costs associated with chronic disease are only the tip of the iceberg. 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.⁸ 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 2030.⁹

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—or 3.5 percent of annual GDP.¹⁰ Our next President should seize the opportunity to reset the agenda and generate American wealth by promoting Americans’ health.

Sincerely,

Cited:
³ “Chronic Disease Overview; CMS, National Health Expenditure Data, 2014.” (2014): vi
⁴ “Chronic Disease Overview; CMS, National Health Expenditure Data, 2014.” (2014): vii
⁵ K.为中国疾病预防控制中心慢性病预防与控制局发布的《慢性病及其危险因素监测》（2006）
⁷ “Chronic Disease Overview; CMS, National Health Expenditure Data, 2014.” (2014): vi
⁸ K.为中国疾病预防控制中心慢性病预防与控制局发布的《慢性病及其危险因素监测》（2006）
⁹ “Chronic Disease Overview; CMS, National Health Expenditure Data, 2014.” (2014): vi
¹⁰ K.为中国疾病预防控制中心慢性病预防与控制局发布的《慢性病及其危险因素监测》（2006）

This letter is addressed to the individual listed for her or his personal capacity. The opinions expressed are the signees’ own and do not reflect the views of the organization(s) with which that individual is affiliated. Signatory letters can be written for express or implied support to the Partnership for Fight Chronic Disease on policies that advance our collective agenda. Questions or comments about this letter? Email info@pfcd.org.