



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF
OCCUPATIONAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE

March 23, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline
Chair
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander and Chairman Kline:

On behalf of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM), I am writing to express our appreciation and support for the *Preserving Employee Wellness Program Act* (S.620, H.R. 1189).

There is increasing recognition in the United States that the physical and mental health of the workforce is inextricably linked to the economic health of the workplace. Improved employee health equals improved employee performance, engagement and productivity. Unfortunately, the American workforce is not as healthy as it could or should be. The overall health of Americans is on the decline, with studies showing a dramatic rise in recent years of health risks like obesity and chronic diseases like diabetes, across all age groups.

Workplace wellness programs are emerging as a key building block in this new paradigm, helping promote a true culture of health in the workplace. These programs are based on prevention and integrated health management and are aimed at decreasing the burden of illness overall by focusing health management strategies "upstream" from the onset of chronic disease. Rather than simply treating disease, wellness programs seek to keep healthy people healthy and bring people at high risk back from the brink of illness by managing health risk factors and promoting proactive health maintenance strategies.

This legislation provides legal certainty—and eliminates confusion arising from action by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)—for employers offering employee wellness programs that lower health insurance premiums to reward healthy lifestyle choices. The legislation provides support for those employers what may be hesitant to provide wellness programs for fear of violating EEOC requirements.

March 23, 2015

Page 2

Please let us know how we can assist you communicating the importance of the legislation, and please do not hesitate to contact Pat O'Connor, ACOEM's Director of Government Affairs, at 202-223-6222 if ACOEM can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn L. Mueller, MD, MPH". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathryn Mueller, MD, MPH, FACOEM
President