

Office of Health Plan Standards and Compliance Assistance
Employee Benefits Security Administration
Room N-5653
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Attention: RIN 1210-AB44
RE: Coverage of Preventive Services

Dear Sirs/Madams:

Transformation of our nation's health care system from an illness-treatment system to a health and wellness system is a vital and achievable goal that was advanced through enactment of the ACA. The coverage of preventive services listed in the 'Interim Final Rules for Group Health Plans and Health Insurance Issuers Relating to Coverage of Preventive Services Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)' provides important tools to promote health in this nation.

As discussed in the benefits section of the Interim Final Rule, the evidence is clear, small advances in healthy living, such as sustained weight loss of just 10%, reduces the likelihood of type II diabetes by 50%¹ and reduces lifetime medical costs by \$2200². Weight Watchers, with over 45 years of experience providing education, tools, and support to empower people to healthy weight management, has identified four key components to success to weight loss and healthy living programs:

- 1. Provide an incentive to lose weight.**
- 2. Educate about the range of tools that can help individuals achieve sustainable weight loss and those that are appropriate for varying levels of severity of obesity and psychological profiles.**
- 3. Create an environment that makes healthy choices easier to make.**
- 4. Take away the barriers that inhibit people from starting a weight loss effort.**

Fundamentally, we believe it is possible to create an environment in which people can make smart, healthy choices and successfully conquer obesity. We believe this is true not only for people who follow the Weight Watchers program, but for all people who deal with weight issues of varying degrees every day. Improving the incorporation of

¹ Hamman et al., Effect of Weight Loss with Lifestyle Intervention on Risk of Diabetes, *Diabetes Care*, September 2006, 29(9): 2102-2107, 2105.

² Oster et al., Lifetime Health and Economic Benefits of Weight Loss Among Obese Persons, *Am J Public Health*, October 1999, vol. 89 No. 10, 1536-1542, 1536.

principles for success into individual, group and self-funded insurance plans will help individuals today and for the next decade.

The standards for preventive services coverage in the Interim Final Rule provide tools that address three of the four principles key to improving success of weight loss and healthy living programs. Through the requirement that plans cover screening and, when appropriate, intensive diet counseling, including community-based intensive dietary counseling, the education of individuals about options is advanced, the environment to promote healthy choices is improved, and barriers to are removed. These are important steps forward in addressing and achieving healthy weight more broadly throughout our nation.

We believe a broad array of effective, scaleable, scientifically proven solutions for dietary and healthy living must be made consistently available to individuals. **The provisions that permit plans to engage reasonable medical management are vitally important to ensuring that the full range of effective, scaleable, and scientifically proven prevention tools are available and deployed.** We applaud the agencies' clear directive that permits benefit flexibility and reasonable medical management that would lead to coverage of the evidence based range of healthy living and weight management support for those with obesity and weight related chronic illness.

Sincerely,

Karen Miller-Kovach, MBA, MS, RD
Chief Scientific Officer
Weight Watchers International, Inc.