



**\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\***

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**\*\*\*Media Contact\*\*\***

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## **Obesity Costs take a greater toll on America's health and economy** *Renewed importance of calculating full cost savings of chronic disease prevention*

**(Washington, DC)** Today, the Campaign to End Obesity expressed concerns over new findings in a report by Cornell University researchers. According to the report, "The Medical Care Costs of Obesity," it is now believed that the total cost of health care associated with U.S. obesity is \$190.2 billion a year, or 20.6 percent of total U.S. health spending – twice as much as previously reported.

The Cornell study, conducted by a team of researchers led by John Cawley, a professor of economics and policy analysis, is "yet another signal that failure to implement policy and other solutions designed to reverse the U.S. obesity epidemic puts our nation's economy at serious risk," said Stephanie Silverman, cofounder of the Campaign to End Obesity.

Recently, the Campaign published a study, "Assessing the Economics of Obesity and Obesity Interventions," in which two former Bush Administration health economists reviewed an array of prevention and intervention efforts that can be cost effective or yield important long term savings in the form of reduced spending on obesity related health conditions. The study is available at [www.obesitycampaign.org](http://www.obesitycampaign.org).

Silverman noted that Congress, as part of the Affordable Care Act, had created a new Prevention and Public Health Fund designed to fill the policy gap in tackling the U.S. obesity epidemic and begin to reduce associated, long term health costs. "Unfortunately, the fund was recently cut by \$5 billion and recent reports indicate further cuts are being discussed in Congress. Given the importance of taking proactive measures to move the dial on adult and child obesity in America, cutting the Prevention Fund is perplexing and a step in the wrong direction," Silverman said.

One reason that policymakers may be failing to make valuable investments in obesity reduction is a flaw in the current budgeting process, Silverman noted. That model, employed by the Congressional Budget Office and others, fails to account for the long-term savings of programs that successfully mitigate or reverse chronic diseases and, in doing so, cut the associated long-term health spending associated with obesity and other chronic conditions. As the authors of the Campaign's study recently recommended, a longer budgeting window – 25 years instead of just 10 -- more accurately captures improvements in health status and substantial cost savings that result from effectively designed programs

"This new research from Cornell is a powerful reminder that we must think in real economic terms about the obesity epidemic in America. We cannot sustain these costs – costs that are much worse than many believed. We must make targeted investments in policies that can help reverse course and truly bend the cost curve in health care," Silverman said.

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### **About the Campaign to End Obesity**

By bringing together leaders from across industry, academia and public health with policymakers and their advisors, the [Campaign to End Obesity](http://www.obesitycampaign.org) provides the information and guidance that decision-makers need to make the changes necessary to reverse one of the nation's costliest and most prevalent diseases.