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United States House Committee on the Budget
204 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: H.R. 766, the Preventative Health Savings Act

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.R. 766, the Preventative Health Savings Act. The Alliance for Aging Research (the Alliance) is a patient advocacy organization that, since 1986, has advanced policies that embrace healthy aging as a greater good and value scientific research that advances dignity, independence, and equity.

This bill would change the calculation and prioritization of healthcare costs in the United States by ensuring that bill scores from the Congressional Budget Office more accurately reflect the long-term, cost-saving potential of preventative healthcare initiatives. The change will allow policymakers to make informed decisions that promote earlier detection, screening, and treatment of conditions for patients and contribute to the fiscal sustainability of healthcare programs.

This approach supports the real-world impact of healthcare and prevention efforts – where an investment is made with the expectation that proactive care will result in longer, healthier lives. It is vital that the CBO appropriately captures the financial savings of these efforts to avoid creating procedural barriers that make it difficult to pass legislation that eases access to screening and prevention efforts, as well as valuable therapeutics. While the costs of additional interventions are – in most cases – likely to increase costs over baseline, more inclusive and longer-term analyses can more fully capture the financial benefits of healthcare interventions. Improved analyses will allow Congress to more accurately assess the cost of healthcare proposals compared to their benefit to individuals and society.

Diagnostics and screenings are fundamental components of healthcare for individuals across all age groups. They are essential preventative medicine tools, enabling early disease detection and effective healthcare management. However, the actual value of

these measures extends beyond immediate health benefits. Early detection not only improves health outcomes but also proves to be economically prudent in the long run.ⁱ In our increasingly aging population, the importance of early detection cannot be overstated. Older adults are particularly susceptible to a myriad of health conditions, including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and neurodegenerative disorders. Early detection allows for timely interventions, which can significantly improve treatment outcomes and reduce healthcare expenditures over time.ⁱⁱ

Studies have consistently demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of early detection strategies. For example, research conducted in high-income countries has shown that treatment costs for cancer patients diagnosed at an early stage are substantially lower compared to those diagnosed at later, more advanced stages.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, early detection measures for cardiovascular diseases have been shown to reduce disease-related costs and improve patient outcomes.^{iv}

Moreover, preventative healthcare initiatives have broader societal implications beyond individual health outcomes. A proactive approach to healthcare, focusing on prevention rather than treatment, can alleviate the burden on healthcare systems and promote overall public health. By investing in preventative measures, policymakers can reduce the incidence of costly chronic diseases, thereby reducing healthcare costs and improving population health outcomes. CBO must be able to consider these factors when making cost determinations that will inform Congress of the broader implications of policy. Without holistic analysis, CBO misses an essential aspect in calculating healthcare expenditures and puts policymakers at risk of making decisions based on costs that can trigger a series of longer-term health and financial repercussions. These can occur both in the case of not passing legislation that may improve beneficiary access and in the opposite case of when a bill is passed with an inflated score that puts funding for other beneficial health or social programs at risk through their selection as pay-fors.

From a payer and budget perspective, it is essential to take a long-term view when evaluating healthcare policies. While preventative and diagnostic measures may require initial investment, the potential savings resulting from early detection and treatment can outweigh the upfront costs. For example, by investing in preventative healthcare initiatives, policymakers can mitigate the financial burden of treating advanced-stage diseases and reduce healthcare expenditures over time.

Furthermore, the economic impact of preventative healthcare initiatives extends beyond healthcare budgets. A healthy population is more productive and contributes positively to economic growth. By promoting preventative healthcare measures, policymakers can foster a healthier workforce, reduce absenteeism, and enhance productivity, ultimately

benefiting the economy.^v While these factors may be complex to quantify fully, they remain an essential consideration in the valuation of healthcare policymaking.

In conclusion, the Alliance urges Congress to consider the long-term benefits of preventative healthcare initiatives, including early diagnostics and screenings, in shaping healthcare policy and to pass H.R. 766 on a bipartisan basis. This legislation will ensure that Congress and the CBO can appropriately evaluate and prioritize preventative, diagnostic, and other valuable healthcare interventions.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. The Alliance stands ready to support efforts to advance preventative healthcare initiatives and promote all Americans' health and longevity. For additional questions, please reach out to Adina Lasser at alasser@agingresearch.org.

Sincerely,



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Vice President, Public Policy and Government Relations



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ⁱ Brill, Joel V. *Screening for Cancer: The Economic, Medical, and Psychosocial Issues*. 16 Nov 2020.

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ⁱⁱ Cutler, David et al. *Explaining the Slowdown In Medical Spending Growth Among The Elderly, 1999-2012*. Feb 2019.

<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05372>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Early Cancer Diagnosis Saves Lives, Cuts Treatment Costs*. World Health Organization. 3 Feb 2017.

<https://www.who.int/news/item/03-02-2017-early-cancer-diagnosis-saves-lives-cuts-treatment-costs#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20studies%20in%20high,cancer%20at%20more%20advanced%20stages>

^{iv} Wolcherink, Martijn JO, et al. *Health Economic Research Assessing the Value of Early Detection of Cardiovascular Disease: A Systematic Review*. 16 Jun 2023. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10492754/>

^v Viju Raghupathi and Wullianallur Raghupathi. *Healthcare Expenditure and Economic Performance: Insights From the United States Data*. 13 May 2020. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7237575/>