

November 2, 2009

Mrs. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20050

Dear Mrs. Obama,

In 2000, President Bill Clinton proclaimed March as “National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.” We believe that March 2010 would be an ideal time to reinitiate a national dialogue about colorectal cancer. We respectfully request that you host an event at the White House designed to heighten the public’s awareness of this issue, including the improvements made in prevention, detection, and treatment for colorectal cancer. Undoubtedly, you would be an inspiration to the many Americans who have not yet undergone even the most basic measures aimed at preventing death from colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in both women and men combined. Fortunately, death rates from colorectal cancer have dropped during the last 15 years. This decline is attributed to prevention and early detection using technologies like colonoscopy. After years of education, research, and increased access to coverage for screening, more lives are being saved than ever before, but we still have a long way to go. Research shows that regular screening starting at age 50 is an effective weapon for combating deaths from colorectal cancer. Yet, only half the people in this age group take advantage of important colorectal cancer screening tests.

Over the past decade, programs and collaborative efforts have been initiated to encourage awareness, prevention and treatment of this deadly disease. However, we know there still exist large disparities in access to colorectal cancer screening and treatment among people of different race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

We are grateful that you and President Obama have made preventive health care such as cancer screenings a centerpiece of the current health care reform debate. As President Obama stated in his address to the Joint Session of Congress this year, “there is no reason we shouldn’t be catching diseases like...colon cancer before they get worse. That makes sense, it saves money and it saves lives.”

The undersigned patient advocacy and physician organizations would be honored if you would lend your voice to help make all Americans aware of this important health issue. If you are interested in exploring this opportunity, please contact Jill Blim, associate executive director of the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy, at (630) 570-5633.

Sincerely,

Affiliated American CSA Foundation
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Gastroenterology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation of America
Colon Cancer Alliance
Colorectal Cancer Coalition
Digestive Disease National Coalition

Hepatitis Foundation International
International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders
Jay Monahan Center for Gastrointestinal Health
National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable
New York Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
Pennsylvania Society of Gastroenterology
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates
United Ostomy Associations of America