Preventive services can help individuals avoid acute illness, identify and treat chronic conditions, prevent cancer, and improve health. By utilizing preventive care such as diagnostic tests, screenings, vaccines, and behavioral interventions, populations can optimize patient-centered outcomes, reduce health care disparities, and often mitigate the need for more serious and costly future medical intervention.

The preventive services provision of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires nearly all private health plans to provide coverage for certain preventive services without cost-sharing. These services include:

- Items and Services receiving an “A” or “B” rating from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)
- Immunizations recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the CDC
- HRSA-supported recommendations for preventive care and screenings for women and children

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services estimated that 232 MILLION AMERICANS had access to preventive care with zero cost-sharing in 2022. Nearly 25% of surveyed Americans prioritize preventive care as the most important health insurance coverage. Eliminating cost-sharing for preventive services benefits all patient demographics, but strong evidence indicates that minority populations and low-SES individuals benefit the most.

Preventive services can help individuals avoid acute illness, identify and treat chronic conditions, prevent cancer, and improve health. This popular policy has enhanced healthcare access and reduced disparities in the use of preventive services, and improved health outcomes for millions of Americans.

According to a recent survey, 37% of adults report delays or avoidance of preventive care due to cost, highlighting the importance of maintaining cost-sharing exemptions for these essential services.

If the Braidwood ruling is upheld and cost-sharing is required, enrollees using preventive services may face a substantial increase in their individual out-of-pocket costs, but could yield a minimal impact on overall health care spending. Moreover, imposing cost-sharing is likely to reverse the progress made by the preventive service provision and the intensifying efforts to reduce socioeconomic, racial, and LGBTQ+ health disparities; a concern that should be weighed carefully by policymakers.