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Council testifies before House Committee on Education and the Workforce

Consistent federal policy and regulatory framework vital for workplace wellness programs

WASHINGTON, DC - In testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce today, the American Benefits Council emphasized the great need for consistent federal policy to continue the success of workplace wellness programs.

Allison R. Klausner, principal at Conduent and government relations leader for the company's HR Services Knowledge Resource Center - and [newly appointed Council Board Chair](#) - [testified on the Council's behalf](#), outlining the importance of a policy landscape that can accommodate workplace wellness programs. The increasing popularity of these programs - [83 percent of large U.S. companies \(200 or more workers\) offered at least one wellness program in 2014](#) - is fueled by the growing body of evidence that employers can contribute to cultivating a healthier workforce.

"Because federal regulations are not aligned in a consistent manner, they have put at risk the availability and effectiveness of workplace wellness programs," Klausner said. "This deprives employees and their families of the meaningful wellness benefits that such programs offer, including improved health and productivity."

Despite support of wellness programs from Congress in recent years, "employers continue to face complex and inconsistent regulations for the design and administration of these programs, most recently resulting from regulations finalized by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ('EEOC')," Klausner said.

Klausner expressed the Council's support for the discussion draft of the [Preserving Employee Wellness Programs Act](#). This measure clarifies "that wellness programs complying with HIPAA and the Affordable Care Act would not violate the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act merely by offering a reward. This is a step toward consistent federal policy."

The Council's public policy strategic plan, [A 2020 Vision: Flexibility and the Future of Employee Benefits](#), urges lawmakers that "regulations should proceed in a consistent, collaborative manner that support participatory and outcomes-based wellness initiatives." The Council will continue to advocate for employer flexibility to sponsor these programs as health reform legislation is considered on Capitol Hill.

For more information on wellness issues, or to arrange an interview with Katy Spangler, senior vice president, health policy, contact Jason Hammersla, Council senior director of communications, at jhammersla@abcstaff.org or by phone at 202-289-6700 (office) or (202) 422-4652 (cell).

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The American Benefits Council is the national trade association for companies concerned about federal legislation and regulations affecting all aspects of the employee benefits system. The Council's members represent the entire spectrum of the private employee benefits community and either sponsor directly or administer retirement and health plans covering more than 100 million Americans.