Dear Mr. President:

Every March the colorectal cancer community honors those who are fighting or have lost their battle with colorectal cancer by holding special events to raise awareness about the disease, including symptoms, risk factors, and screening tests. We ask that you join us in spreading the message about colorectal cancer prevention and early detection by issuing a proclamation designating March 2014 as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

Despite being one of the most preventable types of cancer, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in men and women in the United States and costs our health care system approximately $14 billion annually. The lifetime risk of getting colorectal cancer is one in 20. This year, an estimated 135,000 individuals in the United States will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and more than 50,000 individuals will die from the disease.

Colorectal cancer is largely preventable thanks to effective screening tools. Yet, one in three adults between the ages 50 and 75 are not up to date with recommended colorectal cancer screenings. Patients with localized colorectal cancer have a five-year survival rate of 90 percent, but only 39 percent of all diagnoses occur at this stage due, in part, to the underuse of screenings. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that if every individual aged 50 or older had regular screening tests, as many as 60 percent of deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented. However, there is a great need to increase education and awareness about screenings.

Lack of education and awareness are the biggest barriers to reducing death and suffering from colorectal cancer. While more than 90 percent of colorectal cancer cases are diagnosed in those age 50 and older, anyone at any age can get colorectal cancer. Knowing the signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer is critical to an early diagnosis and timely medical intervention. Through education and awareness, we can erase the myths, stigma and embarrassment that are sometimes associated with colorectal cancer and screening, and we can remind the American public about healthy lifestyles that reduce the risk of colorectal cancer and other diseases.

Thank you for considering our request for a proclamation designating March 2014 as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

Sincerely,

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Member of Congress      Member of Congress