October 5, 2017

The Honorable Don Wright, MD, MPH
Acting Secretary
The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Each year, we mark American Diabetes Month in November and American Heart Month in February. As you already know, both diabetes and heart disease are present in the U.S. at epidemic proportions and these awareness activities are an annual reminder not only of the challenges faced by people living with these chronic conditions, but, as importantly, the opportunities for greater prevention.

As a physician, you know well that both diabetes and cardiovascular disease are present in the U.S. and often affect individuals simultaneously. People with type 2 diabetes are more than twice as likely to develop cardiovascular disease and live seven to eight years less than their peers. Today, more than one in four Medicare beneficiaries has diabetes and a third of them have both diabetes and hypertension – the two leading causes of end-stage renal disease.

Despite these facts, awareness of the connection between diabetes and heart disease is low, even among those already living with diabetes. A lack of awareness of the risks prevents people from taking action to lower those risks and prevent or delay cardiovascular disease and its complications. Preventable deaths are tragic evidence of those missed opportunities: at least 68 percent of people age 65 and older with diabetes die from heart disease and nearly one in five dies of stroke. In fact, the American Heart Association considers diabetes to be one of seven major controllable risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
The National Diabetes Volunteer Council is working together with other organizations, including the American Diabetes and the American Heart Associations, to raise awareness of this diabetes heart connection by marking November 9th as National Diabetes Heart Connection Day. We need your help by including National Diabetes Heart Connection Day on the National Health Observances Calendar.

Change begins with awareness and we need your support in helping us to recognize Diabetes Heart Connection Day on November 9, 2017 as a national health observance as well as setting the foundation for years to come by adding the date to the National Health Observances Calendar.

Thank you for this important consideration.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Lawrence T. Smith  
President, National Diabetes Volunteer Leadership Council  
(and 2005-2006 Chair of the Board, American Diabetes Association)  
Personal Address:  229 Tahoma Drive, Lexington, KY  40503

http://ndvlc.org/how-we-work/

ltsmith77@twc.com

cc: National Diabetes Volunteer Action Council Board of Directors