

WASHINGTON DC - Today, Rep Mike Honda (CA-17) issued the following statement, announcing that he is inviting Counsyl CEO and Co-Founder as his guest to the President's 2013 State of the Union address:

Perhaps the signature achievement of President Obama's first term was the passage of the Affordable Care Act. As he lays out his detailed agenda for his second term with this State of the Union Address, I am sure that the President will talk about the benefits to public health and to our nation's economic well-being that the ACA will bring about. One of the key aspects of the law that took effect at the beginning of this year is an expansion of coverage for preventive health care, which helps people stay healthy and avoids the costs that arise when health problems develop undetected and are only treated when they become urgent.

This made me think about the remarkable technology developed by Counsyl, an innovative Silicon Valley company that is using cutting edge technology to reduce costs and expand access to screening. Counsyl has developed an inexpensive test for parents planning to start a family. This test is performed with one tube of blood or saliva and identifies over 100 recessive genetic conditions -- many of which result in severe birth defects, chronic disease, intellectual disabilities and early mortality. The diseases include conditions like Tay-Sachs, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell disease, spinal muscular atrophy, and Fragile X syndrome.

Prospective parents who find that they are at high-risk of having a child with one of these diseases can work with their physicians to receive treatments like in-vitro fertilization to have a healthy child.

The inventive part -- is that this test, for over 100 conditions -- costs less than a single disease screen.

Physicians agree that all couples planning a family should be offered genetic carrier screening, but from a public health perspective, it has traditionally been too expensive to do more than one disease at a time. As a result, most couples learned of their carrier status only after giving birth to a child with a genetic disease. In his Second Inaugural Address, President Obama said "We cannot cede to other nations the technology that will power new jobs and new industries. We must claim its promise. That's how we will maintain our economic vitality and our national treasure..." with which I wholeheartedly agree.

Innovative Silicon Valley startups like Counsyl are committed to socially responsible work and improving human health -- and are leading the way toward the President's goal. That's why I invited Ramji Srinivasan, the company's cofounder and CEO, as my guest to attend the President's 2013 State of the Union Address.