

For immediate release: December 24, 2009

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Cathy Levine

Cell: 614-313.7478

clevine@uhcanohio.org

Col Owens

Cell: 513.300.3042

cowens@lascinti.org



MEDIA STATEMENT

The following is a statement from Cathy Levine and Col Owens, Co-Chairs of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage (OCHC), regarding the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in the U.S. Senate.

“We applaud the Senate for its historic vote to extend access to health care to most Americans. The passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is a true gift to Ohioans. For too many, relief from skyrocketing insurance premiums and health care costs, unfair insurance rules, and lack of access to care is long overdue. This bill represents a uniquely American solution, keeping the best of our current health care system, while eliminating waste and encouraging competition to improve quality.

Although far from perfect, the Senate legislation does expand coverage to 31 million Americans including nearly 900,000 uninsured Ohioans and does provide critical consumer protections improving health care security for Ohioans. In addition to covering most uninsured Americans, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act includes important consumer protections including:

- A requirement that insurers spend 85 cents out of every dollar they receive in premiums on health care rather than profits and administrative costs. If not, people would receive rebates from their insurance companies for the difference.
- A complete ban on lifetime and annual limits on benefits.
- The right to an independent appeal of any decision by an insurer to deny coverage.
- People receiving subsidies to buy insurance will be able to choose from private plans and national plans, including at least one non-profit plan, that are supervised by the same department of the federal government that selects health insurance plans for federal employees.

Through the Senate debate and negotiation, the bill was improved, resulting in much tougher regulation of insurance industry practices, better consumer protections, and a stronger system of long-term care services and supports. It includes \$10 billion in additional funding for safety net health clinics and expanded tax credits for small business; and offers people a much wider set of choices of private and non-profit health plans.

While many aspects of the bill are good for consumers, it still needs improvements when considered with the House legislation during conference. Of particular concern, it lacks *adequate* affordability provisions for individuals and families seeking insurance. We hope this legislation will be strengthened and that the final package will provide adequate subsidies so that working families can afford to obtain the health care they need. We will continue to work with Ohio lawmakers to make meaningful health care reform a reality. We thank Senator Brown for fighting for Ohioans and voting for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.”

Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage is a nonpartisan coalition uniting the diverse consumer voice with the goal of achieving affordable, high quality care for all. Our membership includes AARP, AFSCME Council 8 AFL-CIO, American Cancer Society, Cerebral Palsy Association of Ohio, Faith Community Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, National Alliance for Mental Illness (Ohio), National Multiple Sclerosis Society Ohio Chapters, Ohio ACORN, Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans, Ohio Council of Churches, Progress Ohio, Service Employees International Union, Toledo Area Jobs with Justice, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1059, UHCAN Ohio, We Are The Uninsured, and We Believe Ohio.