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MEDIA STATEMENT

The following is a statement from Cathy Levine and Col Owens, Co-Chairs of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage (OCHC), regarding passage of House Bill 1:

"We applaud Ohio lawmakers for supporting changes to make health insurance available up to an additional 97,500 Ohioans by:

- lowering premiums in the Open Enrollment Program, allowing 52,000 additional Ohioans with pre-existing conditions to afford health insurance in the individual market;
- allowing dependents up to age 28 to be covered by family health insurance policies at no cost to employers if they have been continuously covered, providing a coverage option to an age group that is generally healthy yet has the highest rate of being uninsured;
- providing cafeteria plans for uninsured employees of small businesses to buy coverage with pre-tax dollars, saving these workers up to 30 percent of the premium cost; and
- requiring insurers to report the portion of premium dollars spent on health care compared to marketing, administration and profits— vital information for making health care more affordable.

In addition, we are pleased that the certification period for parents on Medicaid was extended to 12 months, a change that will ease administrative burdens for parents as well as county departments of job and family services.

However, House Bill 1 leaves health care for the most vulnerable Ohioans in critical condition. While we recognize and are thankful that some funds were restored to community health centers, we remain concerned that the steep cuts to health care programs across the board are a step backwards for health care reform. The devastating cuts to health care— including community mental health, alcohol and drug treatment, prenatal care, services to allow elderly Ohioans and Ohioans with disabilities to remain in their homes, and much more—further undermine an already overburdened health care safety net. As well, a variety of Medicaid and other services are funded with tobacco settlement dollars, which have not yet been approved by the court in current litigation. As the recession creates increased demand for prenatal and child health, mental health, and community health care services, these services will be scarce or unavailable.

Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage will continue to work with our state's leaders until all Ohioans have access to affordable, high quality health care."

Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage is a nonpartisan coalition uniting the 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 Council of Churches, 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.