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1,180 Ohioans Are Losing Their Health Coverage Every Week ***Steady Rise of Health Care Costs Drives More Working Families out of the Market***

Columbus, OH—Rising like a deadly tide, escalating health care costs will have caused 184,730 Ohioans to lose their health coverage between January 2008 and December 2010. In that same period, the number of Americans without health coverage is expected to climb by an estimated 6.9 million.

Those troubling statistics are cited in a new report, “The Clock Is Ticking: More Americans Losing Health Coverage,” from the national consumer health organization Families USA. The report documents that most important factor causing the loss of health coverage is the rising cost of health care premiums. Although the economic downturn is contributing to the problem, it is skyrocketing premiums, up 119 percent from 1999 to 2008, that continue to have the greatest impact on family and employer health care costs. In comparison, the Consumer Price Index, which tracks general inflation, rose by only 29.2 per cent in the same period.

Families USA releases its report on the heels of Ohio lawmakers finalizing a two-year budget that leaves community-based wellness, mental health, prenatal, and drug and alcohol addiction, and other health services dramatically under-funded.

“The report puts a number to the faces we see everyday—faces of Ohioans choosing between the cost of health insurance and basic living expenses,” said Col Owens, co-chair of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. “With the cuts to basic health care programs in the state budget, these Ohioans will have no place to turn for health care.”

The report is the first-ever state-by-state projection of the number of people who will lose coverage between January 2008—the period immediately following the last Census Bureau report—and the end of the 111th Congress in December 2010. The report says, for Ohio during that time period, an estimated 184,730 people will have lost or will lose their health coverage. From 2008 through 2010 in Ohio:

(more)

- 1,180 people will lose their health coverage, on average, every week;
- 5,130 people will lose their health coverage, on average, every month; and
- 61,580 people will lose their health coverage every year.

“Clearly, health care costs are out of control, and these costs are making health coverage increasingly unaffordable,” said Cathy Levine, co-chair of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. “Our state and federal leaders need to act now to make health care reform a priority or we will all continue to pay the price. The status quo is unacceptable.”

Employers that do continue to offer health coverage are being forced to pass on the rising costs to their employees by imposing higher premiums or copayments or by offering plans that cover fewer benefits. Other employers are choosing not to offer coverage at all because it is simply too expensive. Between 2000 and 2008, the share of firms offering health coverage declined by 6 percentage points, with small businesses being the most likely to drop coverage.

“With each passing week, more Ohioans and Americans are losing their health coverage,” Levine said. “We have the opportunity now to enact meaningful health reform. The longer our lawmakers wait to act, the more Ohio families will lose coverage.”

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The report is available at <http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/health-reform/clock-is-ticking.pdf>, and a copy of the report methodology is available upon request.

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.