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**Health Care Consumers Ask House Members to Reject SJR1
*Repeal Would Cause Ohioans to Lose Important Benefits and Protections***

Columbus, OH—Today, health care consumers attended the only House committee hearing on SJR1 and asked lawmakers to vote no on the resolution. SJR1 would submit to the voters at the November 8, 2011 general election a proposal to enact a constitutional amendment to prohibit the individual health insurance requirement, or “individual mandate,” from taking effect in Ohio.

“The personal responsibility provision is an important and critical piece of health care reform because it allows for guaranteed health coverage for Americans with pre-existing conditions,” said Col Owens, co-chair of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. “Repealing the personal responsibility provision pulls the rug out from under the consumer benefits and protections of health care reform.”

In addition, Governor Kasich’s budget proposals rely heavily on the tools in the Affordable Care Act for improving quality and reducing costs in Medicaid. The Administration’s proposed changes for how Medicaid services are delivered to people with chronic conditions and the elderly rely on enhanced federal funding and grants to develop new models of care that improve health care quality and patient health and reduce spending.

“The ink isn’t dry on the budget, and lawmakers are jeopardizing some of the most creative solutions to transform our overpriced and broken health care delivery system,” said Cathy Levine, co-chair of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. “It is ironic that many lawmakers who said ‘yes’ to the budget will say ‘no’ to keeping the Affordable Care Act in place. This is bad policy for Ohio.”

Beginning last September, the Affordable Care Act allowed parents to keep their adult children on the family health insurance policy through age 26. For many young adults with entry level jobs who lack health insurance or for those who are looking for employment, this change has allowed them to have health insurance.

This change is critical for Reuben Bresler. Right before he started college, Reuben was diagnosed with diabetes. He is healthy, an athlete, and he controls his diabetes very well. But he was completely uninsurable. The Affordable Care Act allows Reuben to stay on his parents’ insurance policy until he is 26.

“Without the option of health insurance, I considered moving to Israel where I could get coverage,” said Bresler. “While I am healthy and don’t require much medical care, I now have peace of mind that I am covered should I need it.”

When he turns 26, he will have other options for coverage when all the benefits of the Affordable Care Act are in effect.

Dave Girves also asked that lawmakers vote no on Joint Senate Resolution 1. He and his wife are enrolled in Medicare and are getting better health care and cost savings on their prescription drugs.

“Because of the Affordable Care Act, I am paying \$1,200 less for my prescription drugs and my wife and I are getting preventive care with no co-pays,” said Girves. “If the law is repealed, we simply won’t be able to health care and our prescriptions.”

Many Ohioans like Rueben Bresler and Dave Girves are benefiting from the Affordable Care Act, which is already:

- Making tax credits available to 127,000 small businesses.
- Providing peace of mind to the 2.4 million Ohioans who have a pre-existing condition and will be guaranteed that health insurance will be available to them.
- Making insurance available through the new High Risk Pool to more than one thousand Ohioans who have been denied insurance coverage.
- Increasing access to preventive care by eliminating co-pays and deductibles.
- Making insurance available for uninsured young adults by allowing parents to enroll them in a family insurance plan.
- Reducing the donut hole and making medication more affordable for seniors on Medicare.

“The individual responsibility provision of health care reform is central to achieving the goal of coverage for all,” said Owens. “The resolution is a distraction from meeting the needs of uninsured and underinsured Ohioans and we ask our Representatives to vote no. We must continue to move forward, we cannot afford to move back.”

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 AFSCME Council 8 AFL-CIO, American Cancer Society East Central Division, Faith Community Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, National Alliance for Mental Illness of Ohio, National Multiple Sclerosis Society Ohio Chapters, Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans, Ohio Asian American Health Coalition, Ohio Council of Churches, Progress Ohio, Service Employees International Union, Toledo Area Jobs with Justice Coalition, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1059, UHCAN Ohio, and We Are The Uninsured.

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