

Consumers First: New Alliance launches to ensure that the economic incentives of the health care system encourage affordable, high-quality health care

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Consumers, Health Leaders and Allies Must Join Forces to Ensure Consumer Interests are Reflected in National Health Care Debate, Says New National Alliance

Groups Issue “Call to Action” to fundamentally change the economic

incentives of the health care system to provide affordable, high-quality health care for America's families.

Washington, D.C, May14, 2019 – A newly formed alliance that launched today wants to ensure that the economic incentives of the health care system encourage affordable, high-quality health care for all of America's families.

Consumers First: The Alliance to Make the Health Care System Work for Everyone, brings together powerful interests from consumers, employers, children, labor, and primary care providers. The Steering Committee of the Coalition consists of the following seven national organizations:

- Families USA
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Benefits Council
- American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
- American Federation of Teachers
- First Focus
- Pacific Business Group on Health

Consumers First aims to uproot the fundamental economic distortions in the health care system that drive high costs and low-quality care for America's families. The alliance will work to educate Congress, the federal government and state policymakers about critical changes that are needed immediately to ensure the health care system provides higher-value care to the people it serves.

In addition, Consumers First has released a Call to Action [paper](#)

The paper asks allies to join forces to address the significant economic distortions in the health care payment and delivery system that drive high costs and low-quality care. The call to action outlines six policy focus areas in the health care system that need to be addressed immediately:

- High and rising health care prices
- Distortions created by provider payment systems, including Medicare
- Increased health care industry consolidation
- Federal tax policy for nonprofit health care Institutions and insurance plans
- Flawed health care workforce policy
- Inadequate access to data and lack of transparency

One of Consumers First's next steps will be to finalize a congressional and administrative policy agenda on the key changes that are needed in health care.

"While our country has made significant gains in health care coverage in the last several decades, our health care system remains rife with inefficiencies and economic distortions that are hurting every day families. Until we change the incentives that drive low-quality, high-cost care, consumers will continue to be left behind. We have convened the Consumers First alliance and issued this paper to ensure that the economic incentives of the health care system are fundamentally changed so that families can always receive affordable, high-quality health care. This effort is not about tinkering around the edges. Over time, we aim to uproot the economic distortions that are hurting families, and drive to a more efficient, rational payment and delivery systems that puts the needs of consumers *first*," said **Frederick Isasi, Executive Director, Families USA**.

"Affordable, high-quality healthcare is entirely possible for all Americans but will require significant changes in the U.S. health system. We have lost over 10 years of wage growth to health care cost inflation and have not seen needed gains in quality or patient outcomes. We are paying the highest prices in the world for highly variable care. We all deserve better and PBGH's Members are prepared to be engaged and proactive to achieve better care at lower costs. PBGH is excited to partner with Families USA on a shared agenda for healthcare quality and affordability that places the health and financial well-being of employees and families first. Let's get moving! " said **Elizabeth Mitchell, President & CEO, Pacific Business Group on Health**.

"This Alliance was created because for too many American families, access to care is uneven, inconsistent and dependent on multiple variables. While most First-World countries have managed to offer people basic healthcare, here in the U.S.—the wealthiest country in the world—patients are often caught in a maze of arbitrary regulations, payment systems and prices that vary widely.

Our members, who are nurses and healthcare professionals, see these inequities up-close understand all too well the need for greater transparency, oversight and accountability in our healthcare delivery system. But, basic health care is a right human right that should be available to all; not a privilege reserved for the wealthy few. What we need is a sea change in the drivers of our health care system so that working families — indeed all families — can access the care they need and deserve," said **Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of**

Teachers.

“Every single day, AFSCME health care workers see how the current system fails to provide Americans with the care they deserve. The high cost of health care and prescription drugs, coupled with decades of stagnant wages, places millions of Americans in a position where they must choose between paying for basic necessities and life-saving medications. By joining Consumers First, AFSCME will ensure that frontline health care workers are at the table as we seek to expand access to quality health care for all,” said **Lee Saunders, President, AFSCME**.

“Large employers, like the members of the American Benefits Council, provide the high-value, high-quality health coverage that people like. But these employer plan sponsors are consumers, too, and the high costs that plague our health care system – brought about by flawed policies and backwards incentives – are simply untenable. There is much that can be accomplished through cooperation and consensus, which is why we are proud to join with the other members of Consumers First to find practical solutions,” said **James A. Klein, President, American Benefits Council**.

“Children are among the most vulnerable consumers of healthcare and their needs are often neglected. Children need special care, like pediatric surgeons, emergency medications like EpiPens and other items that often don’t receive the attention they deserve. It’s time to put consumers first, and children must be at the front of the line,” said **Bruce Lesley, President, First Focus on Children**.