



For Immediate Release

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Will Illinois throw away its chance to guarantee affordable, quality health insurance for the middle class?

(CHICAGO – October 5, 2011) Illinois has an opportunity to end the nightmare that haunts every middle class kitchen table in the state: The nightmare of losing health insurance due to its cost or job loss. The nightmare of being swamped by medical bills or unable to get needed care.

Illinois has new powers, tools and federal funding to establish a competitive health insurance marketplace that can make affordable, comprehensive healthcare insurance accessible to the majority of its residents. However, Illinois must act now, and it must act wisely. The General Assembly is looking at these important decisions right now, and it is not yet clear what it intends to do.

The Illinois Legislative Health Insurance Exchange Commission was tasked with studying the implementation and establishment of the competitive health insurance marketplace (known as an “exchange”), which must be fully operational by late 2013. The federal government will pay the entire cost of the creation and start-up of the exchange – estimated at over \$90 million, if it is satisfied that Illinois can get it running on time. To make a credible case for these funds, the Illinois Legislature must vote to create the exchange in the Fall veto session and begin implementation now.

A recent survey of over 600 people at member congregations of [United Power for Action and Justice](#) found that for two out of three, the Illinois health insurance marketplace is broken. An exchange would change this, allowing individuals to shop for, compare and enroll in health plans that meet their needs and that can't be taken away. It would also provide help on a sliding scale for families to afford premiums and out of pocket costs, and offer an affordable alternative for small businesses to insure their workforces.

Will Illinois take advantage of this chance to solve one of the foremost problems of our times?

Join us at a press conference on October 7th to discuss the Commission's report and recommendations. You will hear from two respondents of the United Power survey, from a noted member of the health insurance exchange in Massachusetts and from a Massachusetts consumer attesting to the impact of the exchange. In Massachusetts, 98% of the population now has health insurance.

Speakers Include:

- **Nancy Turnbull, Associate Dean for Educational Programs, Harvard School of Public Health; Consumer Representative, board of the Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector Authority, the State of Massachusetts' healthcare exchange**
- **Alliea E. Group, Leader, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization Healthcare Reform Team**
- **John Bouman, President, Shriver Center**

When: Friday, October 7th, 11 a.m.

**Where: 50 E. Washington, Room 503
Chicago, IL 60602**