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## **Consumers Testify to Real Benefits of Health Reform, While U.S. House Committee Talks Repeal**

*More than a dozen Pennsylvanians shared stories about how they have benefited from the Affordable Care Act in a “consumers’ hearing” in the State Capitol Rotunda*

Harrisburg, PA (March 23, 2011) — While members of Congress convened in Pennsylvania’s State Capitol to consider a plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act, real Pennsylvanians held a “consumers’ hearing” in the Rotunda to tell the true story about the landmark law.

Consumers testified to the benefits of the Affordable Care Act — from ending preexisting conditions and other abusive insurance practice to covering preventative care services for seniors to expanding access to quality, affordable health insurance for small businesses and individuals.

“My husband and I were able to put our 24-year-old son back on our family’s health insurance plan because of the provision in the Affordable Care Act that allows us to do so,” said Theresa BrownGold, one of the consumers to testify.

The “consumers’ hearing” took place while the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce held a field hearing at the State Capitol focused on repealing the Affordable Care Act. Congressman Joe Pitts hosted the hearing. Governor Corbett and members of his administration testified, along with Republican state lawmakers and business representatives. Despite the efforts of some Congress members, no consumers were included on the House panel.

“Congressman Pitts’ dog-and-pony show is just another example of corporate-backed politicians’ war on working families,” said Diane Topakian of the SEIU Pennsylvania State Council. “We need to move America forward towards more affordable, secure health care and not backwards to skyrocketing premiums, insurance denials and unchecked insurance company profits.”

The consumers’ hearing, hosted by the Pennsylvania Health Access Network (PHAN), Health Care for America Now and SEIU, featured more than a dozen consumers talking about how they have already benefited from the Affordable Care Act. State Treasurer Rob McCord also spoke.

Pennsylvanians who lost their health coverage this month when the state’s adultBasic program also testified to the need for health reform. Governor Corbett allowed adultBasic to end — and, with it, affordable health coverage for more than 41,000 Pennsylvanians — rather than address a funding shortfall. The Affordable Care Act will help 1.6 million uninsured Pennsylvanians, including those recently uninsured from the loss of adultBasic, obtain health care coverage in 2014.

“Instead of moving forward and working towards implementing the new health care law, our Governor has made it clear he is not on the side of consumers,” said Antoinette Kraus, Project Manager of PHAN. “The Governor has made it clear that he would rather add 41,000 people to the already 1.6 million uninsured instead of moving forward to find a viable solution on adultBasic. He would rather send us backwards to a time when insurance companies dictate who gets coverage and what kind of care people received.”

In his state budget proposal, the Governor proposes redirecting tobacco settlement dollars previously used for adultBasic to a business loan fund.

“I am especially disappointed in our Governor whose budget takes money designated for health care costs and moves it into a lending fund for businesses,” said Freddi Carlip of Lewistown, one of the consumers to testify at today’s “consumers’ hearing.” “It’s obvious where his priorities lie. Right now he’s testifying alongside representatives of the big insurance business, instead of listening to Pennsylvania consumers.”

Many testifiers shared stories about the overwhelming need to fix our broken health care system. Theresa BrownGold shared the story of a young woman name Courtney Leigh Huber who had Type 1 Diabetes. Courtney found it was cheaper to buy her insulin out of pocket than to pay the unaffordable monthly premium for her health insurance.

“Courtney tried to save a little money by cutting back on her nighttime dosage of insulin,” Ms. BrownGold said. “She thought she had the flu. She fell into a coma and died in January 2010 ... The Affordable Care Act would have saved Courtney.”

Members of the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce didn’t hear these stories since the committee chose not to invite consumers to testify.

“The contrast between what is happening in the hearing room and the testimony of Pennsylvanians in the Rotunda couldn’t be more striking,” said Mar Stier, Executive Director of Penn Action. “It is the difference between the voice of average people with real needs and the voice of corporate backed politicians who care about no one but the rich CEOs who contribute to their campaigns.”

*The Pennsylvania Health Access Network (PHAN) is a coalition of 50 groups from across the Commonwealth working to improve access to quality health care through the expansion of health insurance coverage. To learn more, go to [www.pahealthaccess.org](http://www.pahealthaccess.org)*