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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HB 42 Is a Major Step Backwards for Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG, PA (February 7, 2011) — The Pennsylvania House Health Committee approved legislation today that will prevent the state from moving forward with key provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

House Bill 42, sponsored by Rep. Matt Baker, would prohibit Pennsylvania from enacting or enforcing any penalties on individuals who do not purchase health insurance. Under the Affordable Care Act, the individual responsibility provision goes into effect in 2014, when subsidies will be made available to middle- and low-income families to purchase affordable coverage through a health insurance exchange.

“House Bill 42 is a major step backwards for Pennsylvanians,” said Antoinette Kraus, Project Director for the Pennsylvania Health Access Network (PHAN). “Our elected officials should be working thoughtfully and seriously to implement the Affordable Care Act in a way that protects and benefits hardworking Pennsylvania families.

“HB 42 would prevent hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians from accessing affordable health insurance,” Kraus continued. “Currently, 1.3 million Pennsylvanians are uninsured, and 42,000 more people may be joining them if adultBasic ends, as planned, this month. Rather than gaining access to affordable, quality insurance options, these people will be left out in the cold, if HB 42 is enacted.

“The personal responsibility provision ensures people don’t game the system and wait until they are sick to obtain health coverage, driving up costs for all of us,” Kraus added.

Sharon Ward, Director of the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center and a member of PHAN, said HB 42 is part of a broader effort to rollback health care reform at the state and national level.

“One of the real dangers is that this bill will prevent the state from moving forward with key provisions of the law, including establishment of health insurance exchanges that will make it easier for individuals and small businesses to shop for affordable insurance,” Ward said.

On Friday, the Pennsylvania Health Access Network, along with more than 70 other organizations, sent a letter to members of the House Health Committee, asking them to oppose HB 42. The letter states in part: “The Affordable Care Act marks an important achievement for consumers. HB 42 would be a step backwards and an effort to stop its implementation would have devastating consequences for Pennsylvania.” For a full text of the letter, go to www.pahealthaccess.org.

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.