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PBGH/RWJF Study Reveals Large Employers' Health Policy Priorities

Delivery system reform, quality measurement, and transparency are areas of the highest importance; policy is key mechanism for change

SAN FRANCISCO, December 18, 2014—Senior executives in the largest American companies want policies that advance substantive delivery system reform, better quality measurement, and increased transparency across the US health system, according to a survey conducted by the Pacific Business Group on Health (PBGH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). This report was published on the [PBGH website](http://PBGH)

Employers' current efforts to influence the health care system are heavily weighted toward benefit strategies like increased employee cost-sharing and rudimentary transparency tools; most respondents are generally unsatisfied with the results of these strategies. Nearly 90 percent believe greater engagement in the health care policymaking process is an important mechanism for bringing about needed change.

"These results indicate both a common policy platform and strong preference for action from employers," said Kristof Stremikis, study co-author and Senior Manager for Policy at PBGH. "The vast majority of executives with whom we spoke see an active and ongoing role for employers in health care and health policy."

Some of the published results reveal:

- 74 percent of the senior executives surveyed believe employers need to actively drive value across the U.S. health system.
- Senior executives strongly support maintaining the tax exclusion of employer-sponsored health insurance and are uncertain about whether the advent of private exchanges will positively influence the health care system.
- Barriers to more proactive engagement in health care policy include a laser-like focus on core business issues, lack of expertise, and public image concerns.
- Recognizing that these barriers exist for most businesses, many respondents believe the best way to influence policy is by engaging in various coalitions and associations.

These findings are consistent with lessons from PBGH’s and RWJF’s multi-year engagement of the large employer community, and yield important insights for future activities aimed at leveraging the collective employer voice to drive value in health care. In earlier work with an “Employer Kitchen Cabinet” of senior executives, PBGH and RWJF developed a series of joint statements and position papers on a variety of policy issues ranging from transparency to payment reform. Ultimately, those employers demonstrated significant knowledge of—and opinions on—these issues, but felt limited in the extent to which they could act publicly, for many of the reasons articulated in this study.

“In the past, many employers have shied away from a more active role in health care policy, but a large majority of survey respondents see an important role for their companies going forward,” said Bill Kramer, study co-author and Executive Director for National Health Policy at PBGH. “Many business leaders want to work together to leverage their collective strength to positively influence our health care system.”

This study suggests that a significant proportion of large employers see an enduring role for their companies in improving the wellbeing of their workforce and supporting a culture of health in the United States. Barriers to further engagement can be overcome by working with business coalitions to leverage the collective strength of private employers as major underwriters of American health care. This unique study provides a roadmap—common agreement on goals—for the journey.

About Pacific Business Group Health

PBGH is a non-profit coalition of private employers and public agencies focused on improving the quality and affordability of health care. The group represents 60 members that collectively spend \$40 billion purchasing health care benefits for over 10 million Americans each year. For more information, visit www.pbgh.org. Follow PBGH on Twitter at https://twitter.com/PBGH_updates

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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