America’s Largest Employers Urge Congress to Protect Consumers, Primary Care Clinicians in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Pacific Business Group on Health is joined by a consortium of employer groups calling on lawmakers to act immediately to ensure affordable access to health care

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 19, 2020) – The Pacific Business Group on Health (PBGH), which represents private employers and public purchasers spending more than $100 billion annually on health care, is joined today by 35 organizations representing many of the nation’s leading private and public sector employers in issuing a letter to congressional leaders requesting they take immediate action to ensure Americans have access to high-quality, affordable health care both now and long after the COVID-19 pandemic ends. PBGH was joined by three other national organizations -- American Benefits Council, The ERISA Industry Committee, and the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions -- in drafting and coordinating the letter.

The joint letter offers recommendations to achieve the following goals:
• Protect patients and providers by strengthening access to primary care services
• Protect consumers and employers from price gouging, surprise billing and unwarranted price increases
• Protect taxpayers by ensuring accountability and transparency of federal funds for providers
• Protect workers by providing health coverage for those who have been laid-off and furloughed
• Protect self-insured employers and health plans by offering insurance market risk mitigation arrangements

“Large employers have grave concerns about the unprecedented strain the COVID-19 pandemic is placing on our health care system and its impact on the ability of millions of Americans to get the medical care they need now and in the long-term,” said Elizabeth Mitchell, president and CEO of Pacific Business Group on Health.

PBGH and co-signees of the letter are making specific recommendations of Congress for each of their priorities and are requesting that Phase 4 legislation include provisions that can help reshape policy to protect the health care benefits of the roughly 150 million people receiving employer-sponsored health coverage and the American public as a whole.

The specific recommendations include:

• Providing immediate financial assistance to ensure primary care practices can survive the sudden and significant loss of revenue and can continue to serve their patients
• Allowing High Deductible Health Plans to waive all or part of cost sharing for primary care visits
• Mandating health care provider organizations certify they will not engage in mergers and acquisitions of other provider organizations for 12 months
• Enforcing a price-gouging ban, and requiring health care price transparency
• Enacting a market-based solution to surprise medical billing
• Capping costs for mandated out-of-network coverage
• Enacting a market-based solution to surprise medical billing
• Considering a mechanism to prevent COVID premiums spikes

“The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the pre-existing failures of our health care system and reinforced the fact that our physical and economic health are inextricably linked,” Mitchell said. “The current situation must be a catalyst for expediting the reforms that have been needed for years. Doing so is essential not only to ensuring the health of our citizens, but also to restoring our economy. We are urging Congress to take bold action now.”

To review the letter in full, please visit here.

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Letter Signatories:

Coordinating Organizations

American Benefits Council
The ERISA Industry Committee
National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions
Pacific Business Group on Health

Signing Organizations

The Alliance
Central Penn Business Group on Health
Colorado Business Group on Health
DFW Business Group on Health
Employers Health Purchasing Corporation
Employers' Advanced Cooperative on Healthcare
Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value
Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health
HC21
Health Action Council
Healthcare Purchaser Alliance of Maine
Houston Business Coalition on Health
Kansas Business Group on Health
The Leapfrog Group
Lehigh Valley Business Coalition on Healthcare (LVBC)
Louisiana Business Group on Health
Memphis Business Group on Health
Midwest Business Group on Health
National Association of Health Underwriters
Nevada Business Group on Health
North Carolina Business Group on Health
Northeast Business Group on Health
Partnership for Employer-Sponsored Coverage
Pittsburgh Business Group on Health
Rhode Island Business Group on Health
Self-Insurance Institute of America, Inc. (SIIA)
Silicon Valley Employers Forum
South Carolina Business Coalition on Health
St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition
Texas Business Group on Health
The Washington Health Alliance
Wyoming Business Coalition on Health

About Pacific Business Group Health
Pacific Business Group on Health is an action-oriented 501c(3) non-profit organization focused on improving health outcomes, experience and affordability for consumers and purchasers across the United States. Since 1989, PBGH has distinguished itself as a national innovator driven by some of the largest and most influential public and private purchasers of health care in the country, including Boeing, CalPERS, Comcast, Intel, and Walmart. PBGH leverages purchaser action in partnership with providers, payers, and policymakers to identify, test, and scale innovative models for improving health outcomes and affordability.