



For Immediate Release

Important Provisions of Health Care Reform Kick in Today *Affordable Care Act means better access to insurance for Missourians*

September 23, 2010

Today, many Missourians will have greater peace of mind. September 23 marks the 6 month anniversary of the signing of the Affordable Care Act. Improvements to the nation's healthcare system go into effect today that will allow more children and adults to purchase insurance, curb insurance companies' ability to restrict benefits, deny or cancel coverage when an individual get sick, make preventive care more affordable, and help employers with the cost of retirees' health care.

The new provisions include changes that:

- Allow parents to keep young adults on their insurance policy until they are age 26
- Change insurance rules to prevent insurers from denying coverage to children because of a pre-existing condition
- Do away with lifetime insurance benefit limits
- Begin to restrict annual insurance benefit limits
- Forbid insurance companies from dropping an individual's coverage when they get sick. Coverage can only be dropped if an individual lies about something important in their application.
- Allows individuals in new health plans to get preventive care without paying a co-pay or deductible
- Establishes a stronger appeals process for individuals who have been denied coverage
- Forbids companies from providing better benefits to a particular class or type of employee
- Sets up a temporary program to help employers pay for the health costs of retirees

Parents of children with a pre-existing condition too often worry not only because their child has a serious chronic or life threatening illness, but also because they fear they may be left with hospital bills that threaten the well-being of the entire family," stated Ruth Ehresman, of the Missouri Budget Project. "Now they have the security of knowing that insurance companies cannot deny coverage for a sick child under a family policy. And even if their child needs extensive hospital care or less restricted care over a long period of time, they will not bump up against a life time limit."

Young adults comprise the largest group of uninsured individuals. After completing secondary school or college, many young men and women are employed in relatively low paying jobs that do not offer health insurance as a benefit – and are a source of worry for their parents. By allowing them to stay on their parents’ insurance, there is a greater likelihood that they will get the preventive care needed to keep them healthy.

The new rules take effect in policies that are new or are renewed after today.

“The Affordable Care Act isn’t perfect” according to Ehresman, “but it is an important first step toward assuring that individuals and families have affordable choices as they purchase insurance – and that insurance will better cover the health care that Missourians need. Just like Social Security and Medicare, we expect to see changes over time to improve the Affordable Care Act.”

Other benefits of the Affordable Care Act have already begun. Seniors are receiving preventive care without a co-pay and getting assistance with paying for their medications if they fall into the Medicare “donut hole.”

A new federally funded high risk pool is available for adults who have been turned down by insurance companies because of a pre-existing condition. Information on the Missouri pool is available at www.mhip.org or by calling 1.800.821.2231.

Information about the Affordable Care Act and Missouri options for health care may be found at www.mobudget.org and <http://finder.healthcare.gov/>.

The mission of the Missouri Budget Project is to advance public policies that improve economic opportunities for all Missourians – particularly low and middle-income families – by providing reliable and objective research, public education and advocacy. More information is available at www.mobudget.org.