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HEALTH INSURANCE AGENT & BROKER ALLIANCE HOSTS 1000+ STRONG JOINT CAPITOL HILL FLY-IN

Professional Small Business People from 49 States Urge Congress to Adopt Sensible Health Care Reform

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 15, 2009— More than 1,000 professional health insurance advisors, agents, brokers, consultants and employee benefit specialists from 49 states met with over 400 Senate and House offices as part of the Health Insurance Agent & Broker Alliance health care reform fly-in on Capitol Hill.

The Health Insurance Agent & Broker Alliance is comprised of AHIA-NAIFA Health and Employee Benefits (AHIA), The Council of Insurance Agents & Brokers (CIAB), the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America (IIABA or the Big "I"), the National Association of Health Underwriters (NAHU), and the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors (NAIFA).

As the House and Senate actively debate comprehensive health care reform legislation, this joint grassroots fly-in provides an opportunity for the health insurance agent and broker community to send a strong message to Congress to preserve the private delivery of health insurance and to oppose the creation of a government-run public plan.

"Alarming proposals currently under consideration on Capitol Hill provide an uncertain role for the agent in Exchanges, the phase-out of existing small group plans, a new government plan and an employer play or pay requirement," says Cliff F. Wilson, CLU, ChFC, LUTCF, CLF, NAIFA president. "We must build on the strengths of the current health care system in this country, reduce costs, get every American covered and improve the value of our health-care system—without resorting to new government programs or jeopardizing the high quality of care we enjoy and expect as American consumers."

Yesterday, the House has unveiled their version of reform while the Senate continues to move forward on a dual track pending in both the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) and the Committee on Finance.

"Our grassroots fly-in could not come at a better time with health care reform front and center in both the House and the Senate this week," says Robert Rusbult, IIABA president & CEO. "Many of our members come to this debate from two viewpoints: as health care advisors to

consumers and as small business owners who are ready to share their perspective with members of Congress during this very important time in the debate.”

In addition to the “Alliance” whose collective memberships represent more than 500,000 professional health insurance advisors, agents, brokers, consultants and employee benefit specialists, many in the health care and business communities are concerned that a public plan will lead to diminishing quality in health care that leaves the taxpayers holding the bag.

“A government-run health insurance plan will create an uneven system and undermine what works in the existing employer-provided group health insurance marketplace,” says Ken A. Crerar, CIAB president. “Creating a government sponsored program or offering a buy-in option would only increase the costs being shifted to the privately insured and result in nearly 120 million Americans leaving the private system resulting in riskier, more expensive groups to be managed by the employer – ultimately discouraging their participation in the private market.”

“There is no way a governmental agency in some far-removed location could match the service and value agents and brokers bring to their clients,” says Janet Trautwein, NAHU CEO. “Agents and brokers are the point of contact for the majority of Americans who purchase health care coverage, the government would find it difficult to institute successful health care reform without the help of the agent and broker community.”

Participants had meetings with their representatives in Congress on the critical role professional health insurance agents and brokers play in providing health care to millions of Americans. They look forward to being a constructive part of comprehensive health care reform aimed at expanding personal choice and access, reducing costs and improving health care quality.

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