

For Immediate Release

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Consumer, health groups urge White House to reject lobbying efforts to weaken and delay important forms for comparing health plans

WASHINGTON – Consumers Union, the policy and advocacy division of *Consumer Reports*, today sent [a letter](http://www.consumersunion.org/pdf/sbc_consumer_provider_letter_110911.pdf) (http://www.consumersunion.org/pdf/sbc_consumer_provider_letter_110911.pdf) signed by over 50 organizations to White House officials to urge them to fully implement a new requirement for simple, standardized health insurance forms and to reject lobbying efforts to delay and weaken this requirement.

Starting in 2012, the Affordable Care Act aids consumers in understanding employer and individual health plans with a [new simplified form](http://www.naic.org/documents/committees_b_consumer_information_hhs_dol_submission_1107_soc_populated.pdf) (http://www.naic.org/documents/committees_b_consumer_information_hhs_dol_submission_1107_soc_populated.pdf) that clearly explains coverage and allows for easy comparison of health plan options.

Known as the Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC), this form would standardize how consumers view health plan information — like premiums and deductibles. It would include a feature called Coverage Examples that illustrates complicated health plan provisions using hypothetical medical scenarios — much like nutritional labels on packaged food. The form reflects the recommendations of a broad group of stakeholders convened by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC).

Despite having participated in this stakeholder group, insurers and some business groups are now trying to undermine this rule, asking that implementation be delayed by up to two years and seeking to deny this benefit to the 170 million Americans insured through their jobs as required by the law. These groups would also reduce the effectiveness of the Coverage Examples, which testing has shown to be more helpful to consumers than more traditional displays of health insurance information.

Lynn Quincy, Senior Health Policy Analyst at Consumers Union, said, “We now have a blueprint for a form that will make it easier for people to choose and understand health plans. It’s a huge step forward. The forms help not only consumers, but small employers who are trying to choose the best plan for their employees as well. We strongly urge the White House to reject the efforts to weaken this important tool, and rely on the rigorous evidence that shows the tremendous benefits from a standard, consumer-friendly form.”

The letter was signed by Consumers Union, American Cancer Society/Cancer Action Network, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, American Nurses Association, National Multiple Sclerosis Society and other organizations representing health care consumers, practitioners and individuals such as the NAIC consumer representatives.

The letter was sent to Nancy Ann DeParle, Deputy White House Chief of Staff, Jeanne Lambrew, Deputy Assistant to the President for Health Policy, and Gene Sperling, Director of the National Economic Council.

Ms. Quincy of Consumers Union recently published an [op-ed](http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1111/67548.html) (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1111/67548.html>) in Politico to explain the benefits of the SBC form and call for the full implementation of the rule.
