

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Katie Peters

202.657.0685 (*office*)

202.445.4312 (*mobile*)

KatieP@firstfocus.net

CHILD ADVOCATES CONDEMN INSURANCE COMPANIES FOR NOT COMPLYING WITH HEALTH REFORM LAW

Washington D.C. – Today, as child advocates celebrate the implementation of several key provisions of the new health reform law, **First Focus**, a bipartisan child advocacy organization, is calling on insurance companies to comply with the law by continuing to offer policies for children. In recent weeks, several major health insurance companies including Anthem, Aetna, Cigna, Humana, UnitedHealth Group Inc., WellPoint, and CoventryOne have announced plans to skirt the requirement to offer coverage to children, even those with pre-existing conditions. Rather than comply with the new law, these insurers are planning to pull out of the private market for children.

Child advocates are outraged by these announcements and are calling on insurance industry leaders and the Administration to take action to prevent insurance companies from unfairly limiting access to private coverage for children.

Bruce Lesley, president of **First Focus**, issued the following statement:

“Despite record profits, insurance companies are continuing to use America’s children as pawns to further their bottom lines. We were disappointed to learn that instead of meeting the requirement to provide coverage for all children, even those with special health care needs, several leading insurers have decided to put profits ahead of children and to pull out of the market for policies that cover only children. The families who will be impacted by these decisions include parents who work in small businesses and are not offered family coverage, grandparents on Medicare who care for their grandchildren, and returning veterans who get their coverage through the US Department of *Veterans Affairs*. All of these families need insurance for their kids and purchase coverage for them in the private insurance market.

“Insurers should be condemned for continuing to game the system on the backs of children. [Insurers reached an agreement with Administration the in July](#) regarding their concerns about this issue. However, their actions over the last week show that they have been negotiating in bad faith. It bodes poorly for all Americans that, right out of the box, [insurers are renegeing on their commitments to lawmakers and the Administration](#) to maintain child-only policies.

“We urge the Administration to make it clear that those who deny coverage for children today

will lose access to millions of new customers when the new health insurance exchanges go into effect. Children, particularly those with special health care needs, must have strong federal protections and oversight in order to ensure they receive the health care they need to grow and thrive. If insurance companies discontinue child-only plans, the Administration must make sure that kids with pre-existing conditions are able to enroll immediately in state-run high risk pools if they have no other options.

“We applaud the insurance companies who have rejected this cost-saving strategy and who are continuing to write policies for children, including Kaiser Permanente.

“The health of our children is more important than the bottom line of health insurance companies. Continued action and vigilance must be taken in order to ensure that children reap the benefits and promise of health reform, including protections from current private insurance market practices that deny coverage to children with pre-existing conditions.”

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First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. To learn more visit www.firstfocus.net