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The COVID Effect: Expectations for Health Care Coverage, Cost, and Quality in 2021

New Anzalone-Liszt-Grove (ALG) Research/Public Opinion Strategies poll reveals voters' views on the health care system and concerns exposed by COVID-19

Washington D.C. – A new survey from ALG Research and Public Opinion Strategies on behalf of Consumers for Quality Care (CQC) reveals that voters want relief from high out-of-pocket costs and insurance deductibles that pose a barrier to health care access. Read more about the survey [here](#).

“COVID-19 has highlighted just how important health insurance quality and access are,” said CQC Board Member Donna Christensen. “This applies not just to coronavirus testing and treatment, but also to the routine doctor visits for acute and chronic illnesses that that make us more vulnerable to the virus. In this environment, it is more important than ever to ensure affordable access to quality care.”

The cost of health care is the issue voters most want Congress to address with the health care system (67% combined choice). Specific cost concerns include:

- Out-of-pocket costs of coverage like premiums, copays and deductibles worry voters most in the near term (57% combined choice);
- Being unable to afford a high deductible is the single thing that worries them most about seeking care in the future (28% extremely concerned/51% percent overall); and
- Voters almost unanimously agree (92%) on the importance of ensuring deductibles are low enough to not get in the way of accessing care.

“Cost drove the health care debate pre-COVID and this new research finds that cost continues to drive the debate today,” said pollsters John Anzalone (ALG Research) and Neil Newhouse (Public Opinion Strategies). “The COVID-19 public health crisis and its resulting economic pain has only heightened the anxiety voters are feeling about being able to afford health care in this country.”

Voters are also wary of trading quality for cost. When asked to choose, a majority of voters (55%) would prioritize higher quality care over lower costs (45%). Overall, 84% of voters agree that insurance

companies shouldn't be allowed to sell "low-cost" or "bare bones" plans that cover so little that going to the doctor isn't affordable, even with insurance.

Voters want affordability and access and removing the barriers that lead to skipping and delaying care – like high insurance deductibles – and programs that increase access to care – like telehealth visits – are extremely important to Americans looking to navigate the health care system.

With a system stressed from addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, there isn't an appetite for major changes or overhauls right now and 79% of voters agree we should be thoughtful and cautious about any changes we make as we come out of the crisis. But, with so many Americans hurting financially, there is significant support (67%) for Congress and the President to get health care costs under control:

- 80% of voters agree their health care costs keep going up every year;
- 72% of voters struggle with budgeting for annual health care costs due to their unpredictability; and
- More than two-thirds (70%) feel like insurance companies are nickel-and-diming them with all of the out-of-pocket costs they have to pay.

To help policy makers address consumers' health care coverage concerns, CQC has issued a Negotiator's Guide to Health Care Reform [here](#).

This new ALG/POS poll was conducted from January 22-28, 2021. The online survey sampled 1,200 registered voters nationwide. Overall results were weighted to reflect the composition of registered voters across the country.

More information can be found at www.consumers4qualitycare.org/research.

ABOUT

Consumers for Quality Care (CQC) is a coalition of advocates and former policymakers working to provide a voice for patients in the health care debate as they demand better care. CQC is led by a board of directors that includes the Honorable Donna Christensen, physician and former Member of Congress; Jim Manley, former senior advisor to Senators Edward Kennedy and Harry Reid; and Jason Resendez, community advocate, and health care strategist.

To learn more about Consumers for Quality Care and the issues consumers are experiencing, visit <http://www.consumers4qualitycare.org/>.

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