

For Immediate Release

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2021 Consumers for Quality Care Polling: Montanans Expectations Around Health Care Cost and Quality Coming Out of COVID Pandemic

MONTANA – A new survey from ALG Research and Lake Research Partners on behalf of Consumers for Quality Care (CQC) reveals that voters see affordability as a major issue in the state’s health care system and are seeking relief from rising out-of-pocket costs. Read more about the survey [here](#).

“This research confirms what many Montanans have been feeling: the out-of-pocket costs for quality health care are too high,” said the Hon. Donna Christensen, a founding board member of CQC and the first female physician elected to Congress. “With about 18% of Americans with medical debt in collections, it is no wonder why consumers are stressed about the cost of going to the hospital or seeing a doctor. Out-of-pocket costs shouldn’t be so high and unpredictable that they discourage people from seeking care, and insurance should act like insurance and be there for patients when they need it.”

The primary issue that Montanans have with their health care is that it’s too expensive – majorities are concerned about being able to afford high deductibles (77% concerned) or being able to afford their monthly premium (62%). Across the board, cost has become a top-of-mind issue for Montana voters:

- More than four-in-five voters (82%) agree that the amount they pay for health care seems to be going up every year.
- A majority (68%) agree that at some point they have struggled to pay a medical bill even while they had health insurance.
- A quarter of voters (25%) actively have unpaid or overdue medical bills that they are having difficulty paying off. Among voters who are already struggling financially, this number climbs to 44%.

“Montana’s elected officials need to understand the reality of their constituents' healthcare costs and concerns. Montanans are living through an unprecedented increase in health care needs and stress due to COVID, combined with deep economic uncertainty. These polling results prove that congressional action on health care costs is imperative to the wellbeing and security of Montanans.”

Though cost continues to be a priority that Montanans want elected officials to address (49% cite cost as the thing they want their leaders to work on most), coming out of the pandemic,

voters are seeking targeted, careful fixes to the health care system. Most agree we should be cautious making changes as we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic (67% agree).

In particular, Montanans are looking for targeted changes to the health care system, including:

- The prevention of closures of rural VA hospitals and offices across Montana (92% believe this is important).
- The improvement of broadband internet across Montana so people can access telehealth medicine (82% believe this is important).
- The elimination of insurance pre-authorization for tests and treatments that doctors prescribe to diagnose and treat cancer and other life-threatening diseases (70% support this).
- The permanent expansion of Medicaid (63% support this).

This new ALG/Lake Research Partners poll was conducted from July 21-25, 2021. The online survey sampled 601 registered voters in Montana. Overall results were weighted to reflect the composition of registered voters in the state.

More information can be found at <http://consumers4qualitycare.org/montana>.

ABOUT CONSUMERS FOR QUALITY CARE (CQC)

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/>.