



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 7, 2008

Contact: Tracy Munford
212-614-5538

Elisabeth Benjamin
917-364-3332

HIGH POWERED NEW YORK COALITION AIMS FOR ACTION ON HEALTH REFORM:

Receives \$750,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to fund

New York Consumer Voices for Coverage

New Statewide poll finds health top concern

New York, New York — A consortium of leading health advocacy groups, led by the Community Service Society of New York, has been awarded a highly competitive multi-year *Consumer Voices for Coverage* grant totaling \$750,000, from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). RWJF's *Consumer Voices for Coverage* initiative supports state advocacy efforts by fostering strong and robust advocacy infrastructures.

"There is tremendous momentum in the states for implementing effective health care reform. We know from experience that the voices of consumers – the men and women who work hard each day to support their families – are often the most effective in driving necessary change," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "As states launch ambitious health care reform efforts to ensure that more Americans have health insurance, advocates for consumers will be able to make their voices heard."

The grant will fund the formation of the *Health Care for All New York Campaign* (HCFANY) convened by: The American Cancer Society, The Center for Working Families, The Children's Defense Fund, Citizen Action of New York, The Community Service Society, Metro New York Health Care for All Campaign, New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage, and The New York Immigration Coalition.

The grant award was announced locally in conjunction with the release of a new statewide health care poll. The poll of 1,619 New Yorkers in four upstate and downstate regions, conducted by the Community Service Society and national pollster Celinda Lake, in which New Yorker's identified health care as respondents top personal worry, by a margin of 2:1.

- By a margin of 4:1, New Yorkers identified health care as the top action item for their elected officials.
- By a margin of nearly 3:1, New Yorkers said they wanted health reform even if it meant raising taxes.
- The poll also revealed that last year, nearly 25 percent of New Yorkers did not receive needed medical care or prescriptions for lack of money or insurance.
- Over 50 percent of people polled know someone without insurance.

“The RWJ award is a catalyst for health reform in the State of New York,” said David R. Jones, President and CEO of the Community Service Society, which serves as the lead organization for the *Health Care for All New York Campaign*. “There are 2.5 million uninsured people living in New York. These polling results confirm that New Yorkers want and deserve affordable, high-quality health insurance for themselves and their families.”

“When it comes to health care, consumer voices are constantly shouted over by those groups with the biggest PACs and most lobbyists,” added Richard Kirsch, Executive Director of Citizen Action of New York. “We look forward to organizing the voices of New York’s health care consumers to make it clear that they want quality, affordable health care for all and they want it now.”

New York is one of 12 states organizations to be selected as part of the \$15 million initiative to strengthen existing advocacy networks. HCFANY will receive a total of \$750,000 over the next three years. Other states receiving the Consumer Voices for Coverage grant include California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon Pennsylvania and Washington.

“The groups forming the *Health Care for All New York Campaign* are leaders in the effort to reform health care in New York. We are excited to work with such a strong consortium to increase momentum towards action in this state,” said Susan T. Sherry, deputy director of Community Catalyst, who directs *Consumer Voices for Coverage*. “Supporting networks that bring the views of real people to policy-makers and key though leaders in the states about the need for coverage expansion can be a powerful inducement for reform.”

About Health Care for All New York Campaign

The Health Care For All New York (HCFANY) Campaign is a statewide coalition dedicated to winning affordable, comprehensive, and high-quality health care for all residents of New York by 2010. The Campaign will also promote health reform at the federal level. The Campaign was founded by eight leadership organizations: The American Cancer Society, The Center for Working Families, The Children’s Defense Fund-NY, Citizen Action of New York, The Community Service Society of New York, Metro New York Health Care For All, The New York Immigration Coalition, and New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage. HCFANY has united around 10 Standards for Affordable, Quality Health Care for All in New York” that serve as the basis for evaluating health reform proposals. The HCFANY Campaign brings New Yorkers’ voices to the health reform conversation. www.cssny.org

About Community Catalyst

Community Catalyst, Inc., located in Boston, Massachusetts, is a national nonprofit advocacy organization that builds consumer and community participation in shaping the U.S. health system to ensure quality, affordable health care for all. It works in numerous states with state and local organizations as well as with other national organizations. www.communitycatalyst.org

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years, the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. By helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.

Attachments:

Quotes from member organizations

Statewide Health Poll

Selected Slides

Bios of HCFANY members

HCFANY Coalition Quotes

"No one deserves to get cancer, but everyone deserves a chance to fight it," said Peter Slocum, Vice President, Advocacy, American Cancer Society. "That's what this grassroots effort is all about, helping New Yorkers get a fighting chance."

"There can be no expectation that children will succeed in school if they are not healthy, and if their families don't have access to affordable and quality health insurance. This RWJ grant will help position New York to offer what hundreds of thousands of children and their parents absolutely must have: affordable and quality health insurance," said Emma Jordan-Simpson, Executive Director, Children's Defense Fund-New York.

"All New Yorkers deserve quality, affordable health care. Many working New Yorkers and small businesses are eager to buy health care and insurance, but currently it's unaffordable. It's the American way to open the market up to everyone in the community who needs health care, and we all deserve a chance to buy health care we can afford," said Adam Gurvitch, Director of Health Advocacy for the New York Immigration Coalition, a nonprofit policy and advocacy group that represents more than 200 organizations across the state.

"Our goal in this process is to ensure that people with serious illnesses and disabilities can maintain and sustain their health and that they are not left with 'bare bones' insurance that denies them such critical services as rehabilitation, mental health services and prescription drugs," added Susan Dooha, Executive Director of the Center for the Independence of the Disabled of New York which houses New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage.

"New Yorkers desperately need good health care available and affordable to all of us," said Lisa Donner, Co-Director of The Center for Working Families. "We are pleased to be working with our partners to make sure this message is heard loud and clear by lawmakers, and that it gets translated into policies that deliver what they promise."