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PROTECTING HEALTH CONSUMERS
Statement of Kentucky Voices for Health
on the First Anniversary of the Affordable Care Act

March 23 marks the one-year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act being signed into law. Now that health reform is the law of the land, Kentucky Voices for Health believes it is time to move forward to protect consumers of health care.

Moving forward means that people with chronic diseases and pre-existing conditions can no longer be denied coverage – giving peace of mind to those 129 million Americans who will never again be unable to find coverage. Moving forward means that insurance companies will not be able to drop coverage when someone gets sick or to limit the care an individual receives. It means making sure insurance companies spend premium dollars on care, not profits, and cracking down on excessive premium rate hikes. It's time to move forward. Our family and friends cannot afford to go back.

The Affordable Care Act contains a number of key provisions that will protect Kentuckians:

- **The Affordable Care Act ends denial of coverage because of a pre-existing condition.** The Affordable Care Act ends some of the worst insurance company practices. Already, the law bans insurance companies from dropping coverage when someone gets sick and excluding children with pre-existing conditions from coverage. Those protections will be extended to everyone in 2014. This is critical because an estimated 920,000 Kentuckians have one or more pre-existing conditions.
- **The Affordable Care Act lowers premiums for Kentucky families.** The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office examined provisions in the Affordable Care Act and found that it would cut premiums for millions of Americans, particularly those in the individual market. Those in the individual market who get help to pay for their premiums in the form of federal tax credits are expected to see their premiums drop an average of 59% compared to what they would pay without the law. An estimated 221,000 Kentucky families will qualify for the new tax credits when they become available in 2014.
- **The Affordable Care Act ends lifetime limits on coverage.** Because of the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies can no longer put lifetime limits on the

amount of health coverage an individual can receive. It also restricts annual limits and eliminates any cap by 2014.

- **The Affordable Care Act cracks down on excessive premium rate increases.** The Affordable Care Act holds insurance companies accountable and cracks down on unreasonable premium rate hikes. Because of the law, the federal government has made \$250 million available to states to help them develop and implement the tools necessary to crack down on excessive rate hikes. In addition, insurers that are found to raise rates too much can be banned from participating in the new health exchanges that will be available in 2014.
- **The Affordable Care Act ensures premium dollars go for health care and not insurance company profits.** Insurers in the large group market will now be required to spend at least 85% of premium dollars on care, not administrative costs and profits. For the individual and small group markets, insurers must spend 80% of premium dollars on care. Insurers will be required to publicly disclose their rates on a new national consumer website, and consumers will receive a refund if these new limits are exceeded.

Detailed information about the Affordable Care Act and its impact on Kentucky is also available in *The New Health Reform Law: What It Means for Kentuckians*, an issue brief prepared by Kentucky Voices for Health that can be downloaded at <http://kyvoicesforhealth.com/reform.html>. The brief was produced to help Kentuckians understand the health reform law. It includes a basic timeline of what will happen when under the new law, frequently asked questions and resources for further information

Kentucky Voices for Health seeks to work with communities and organization partners to broaden awareness of health care issues. KVH maintains a speakers' bureau of coalition members available to attend meetings and events to provide information about KVH's priorities as well as the provisions of the Affordable Care Act. A speakers' bureau request form can be accessed from <http://kyvoicesforhealth.com/speakersbureau.html>.

Kentucky Voices for Health is a broad coalition of nearly 100 organizations working to improve Kentuckians' health and health care coverage. The coalition's leadership team is composed of representatives from AARP Kentucky, Advocacy Action Network, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Catholic Conference of Kentucky, Covering Kentucky Kids and Families, Kentucky Council of Churches, Kentucky Equal Justice Center, the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, and Kentucky Youth Advocates. Kentucky Voices for Health receives grant funding from the Public Welfare Foundation through the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

Kentucky Voices for Health: Building a healthy Kentucky together.

We're a coalition of concerned Kentuckians who believe that the best health care solutions are found when everyone works together to build them. Right now, families and businesses in every county are facing rising costs, and too many of us go without needed health care. Healthy families create healthy economies. And a healthy Kentucky economy is something we all want. So we're working step by step to build a healthier Kentucky for our families, our children and our grandchildren.