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Organizations listed for
identification purposes

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CONSUMER, LABOR, BUSINESS AND HEALTH GROUPS RE-LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO STOP SURPRISE MEDICAL BILLS

- **Health Access California joined by California Labor Federation as co-sponsor of AB533(Bonta), with strong support from health plans, the Chamber of Commerce, and others, but opposed by some physicians seeking higher payments**
- **Thousands of Californians Continue to Get Unfair Charges Due to Legislative Inaction Last Year**
- **AB 533 (Bonta) offers common sense consumer protections, so that patients going to an in-network provider don't get out-of-network charges for doctors in that facility.**
- **PRESS CONFERENCE CALL TODAY, 10:30 AM**

SACRAMENTO, CA—Today consumer advocates re-launched their efforts to prevent Californians from receiving surprise medical bills of hundreds or thousands of dollars. As part of a ramped-up campaign, Health Access California, the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition, announced that the California Labor Federation is now co-sponsoring their legislation to end surprise bills, which is still pending after the measure stalled on the last day of legislative session last year.

As a result of inaction by the California legislature last year, thousands of California consumers continue to receive surprise medical bills from out-of-network providers even after following the rules of their health plan and using in-network medical facilities. These surprise medical bills often come from an out-of-network anesthesiologist, pathologist, radiologist or another health professional that the patient may have never met and did not choose, costing them hundreds or thousands of dollars.

“If patients follow the rules and go to an in-network hospital or facility, they shouldn't then be surprised with bills for hundreds or thousands of dollars from out-of-network doctors that they didn't choose and may never have even met,” said Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California. “Thousands of California consumers have continued to get these surprise medical bills because some legislators allowed these patient protections to stall last year. With a broader and deeper coalition, and with action pending in other states, we have a renewed sense of urgency and momentum to resolve this issue and protect California consumers in the next few months.”

With help from the California Labor Federation, Consumers Union, other groups representing patients, insurers, employers, and working families announced they are re-launching their effort to prevent Californians from facing surprise medical bills. Typically, consumers are unaware if they encountered an out-of-network provider until they receive the surprise bill, which can be hundreds or thousands of dollars and cause financial hardship for consumers. Further, these bills do not count toward the annual in-network cost-sharing cap of \$6,600.

“Rising health care costs are a growing concern to workers and their families,” said California Labor Federation communications director Steve Smith. “When workers get zapped with a surprise bill to the tune of thousands of dollars for a health care procedure they thought was covered, it places an enormous burden on their family. Surprise bills also drive up costs for employers, making it more difficult for workers to bargain for fair wages. AB 533 is a common-sense measure that would prevent surprise billing, drive down costs and ensure workers and their families can afford the medical care they need.”

Health Access California is hosting a media tele-conference this morning with policy experts and consumers who have been affected by surprise out-of-network bills. Media will have the opportunity to ask questions.

WHAT: Teleconference with consumers affected by surprise out-of-network medical bills

WHEN: Monday, March 21, 2016

TIME: 10:30 am PT

DIAL: 866-939-3921

PARTICIPANTS

- Anthony Wright, Executive Director, Health Access California
- Betsy Imholz, Special Projects Director, Consumers Union
- Steve Smith, Communications Director, California Labor Federation
- Sarah Ross, consumer from Bayside, CA
- Kathi Wright, consumer from Temecula, CA

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