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## Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **AHIP Announces Proposal to Expand Access to Health Insurance Coverage to Every American**

**(Washington, DC)** – More than 40 million uninsured Americans will have access to affordable health insurance coverage under a comprehensive new set of targeted policy proposals released today by America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP).

The plan would expand eligibility for public programs, enable all consumers to purchase health insurance with pre-tax dollars, provide financial assistance to help working families afford coverage, and encourage states to develop and implement access proposals.

"The leaders of the nation's health insurers are united in a strong belief that every American should have access to health care coverage," said J. Grover Thomas Jr., Chairman, Trustmark Mutual Holding Company; and Chairman, AHIP Board of Directors. "This bold program would expand coverage to tens of millions within a framework that is fiscally sound and promotes individual responsibility."

The plan is designed to expand access to health insurance coverage to all children within three years and 95 percent of adults within 10 years. AHIP estimates that full implementation of this proposal would cost the federal government approximately \$300 billion over a 10-year period.

"The access crisis causes millions of Americans to forgo the preventive care and treatment for chronic illness that they need," said George Halvorson, Chairman and CEO, Kaiser Permanente; Chairman-elect, AHIP Board of Directors. "By ensuring everyone has access to coverage, we can make families more secure, workers more productive and, ultimately, make this a healthier nation."

The AHIP plan calls for enactment of federal legislation that provides significant financial incentives to states and makes changes to federal tax policy to make health coverage more affordable. Key elements of the AHIP plan include:

- Expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to make eligible all uninsured children from families with incomes under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
- Improving and expanding Medicaid to make eligible all uninsured adults, including single adults, with incomes under 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Line.



- Establishing a Universal Health Account (UHA) to allow all individuals to purchase any type of health care coverage and pay for qualified medical expenses with pre-tax dollars, with federal matching grants for contributions made by working families to the UHA.
- Establishing a health tax credit of up to \$500 for low-income families who secure health insurance for their children.
- Establishing a new \$50-billion Federal Performance Grant to assist states in expanding access to coverage.

The new reform plan follows seven months of analysis and deliberation among AHIP board members. "Thanks to the tireless efforts of the senior leadership of our industry, we have established a set of practical policy initiatives that can, for the first time, provide millions of uninsured Americans with access to affordable health insurance coverage," said Jay M. Gellert, President and CEO, Health Net, Inc; and Chairman, AHIP Policy Committee.

AHIP simultaneously released a set of principles for states to consider as they discuss access reforms. The state principles focus on practical steps states can take to shore up the health care safety net and make private insurance coverage more affordable and accessible.

"Our Board has crafted an innovative proposal that builds on the strengths of the current system with targeted federal and state strategies that can make health insurance available to millions of families nationwide," said Karen Ignagni, President and CEO of AHIP. "We urge Congress and state legislators to make health care coverage their top priorities, and we are committed to working with all stakeholders to expand access to all Americans."

To shine the spotlight on the problem of the uninsured and the need to take action, AHIP also announced that it would devote significant resources to building support for its access proposal through a new "We Believe" campaign. This effort includes a national community outreach program led by AHIP board members, advertising in opinion-leader publications, and earned media outreach.

To learn more about AHIP's reform proposal, please visit <http://www.americanhealthsolution.org>.

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*America's Health Insurance Plans – Providing Health Benefits to More Than 200 Million Americans*