



# CONSUMERS F1RST

The Alliance to Make the Health Care System Work for Everyone

**FAMILIESUSA**  
THE VOICE FOR HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS

**AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS**  
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

**AMERICAN BENEFITS  
COUNCIL**

**AFSCME**  
We Make America Happen

**aft**  
A Union of Professionals

**FIRST FOCUS**

**PBGH**  
PACIFIC BUSINESS  
GROUP ON HEALTH

## Call to Action

**Consumers First.** This new alliance brings together powerful interests from consumers, children, employers, labor unions, and primary care providers working to change the fundamental economic incentives and design of the health care system. Our work is to realign the incentives and design of health care so that the system truly delivers the health and high quality care that all families across our nation deserve.

**Call to Action.** Despite the best efforts of policymakers, providers, academics, and advocates, health care prices continue to rise without commensurate improvement in quality. It is time for the vibrant network of consumer health care organizations, employers, labor unions, health care professionals, and leaders across the nation to join in efforts to uproot the fundamental economic distortions in the nation's health care payment and delivery system to ensure the best health and health care are accessible and affordable for every person across the country. America's families need a unified and unbiased voice to provide a balance to the interests of the health care sector, which too often encourages policymakers to overlook the interests of America's families, children, seniors, and adults in the policies and programs that govern the U.S. health care system.

Consumers First has identified six major distortions as the most urgent issues for immediate action under this new initiative:

- » High and rising health care prices
- » Distortions created by provider payment systems, including Medicare

- » Increased health care industry consolidation
- » Federal tax policy for nonprofit health care institutions and insurance plans
- » Flawed workforce policy
- » Inadequate access to data and lack of transparency

Together we will work to educate Congress, the federal government, and state policymakers about key changes that are needed in health care policy to rectify these distortions. Over the next several months, Consumers First will release a focused congressional and administrative policy agenda and invite other groups to join this effort.

The steering committee of Consumers First is made up of leading consumer, employer, labor, and provider organizations. Consumers First will work to ensure that the nation's health care system finally fulfills its obligation to the people it serves by providing affordable, high-quality, cost-effective care to everyone.

Over the past several decades, policymakers, health care providers, employers, labor unions, insurers and other payers, academics, and other stakeholders have worked to improve our nation's health care payment and delivery systems. Despite various reform efforts, the cost of health care in the United States continues to rise without producing meaningful improvements in the quality of care. Coupled with stagnating wages for the bottom 90% of income earners, the high and rising cost of health care in the United States are pushing the American dream out of reach for America's families (see graphic on the right).

In partnership with the American Academy of Family Physicians; the American Benefits Council; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; the American Federation of Teachers; First Focus; and the Pacific Business Group on Health, Families USA is launching Consumers First: The Alliance to Make the Health Care System Work for Everyone. Consumers First will organize consumer health care organizations, employers, labor unions, health care professionals, and allies to counterbalance the entrenched interests in the health care sector.

**View the full report at:**  
[FamiliesUSA.org/  
Consumers-First-Our-Call-to-Action](http://FamiliesUSA.org/Consumers-First-Our-Call-to-Action)

**For more information about Consumers First and to sign up for updates on our work, visit:**  
[FamiliesUSA.org/Initiatives/Consumers-First](http://FamiliesUSA.org/Initiatives/Consumers-First)

## Wage Stagnation and High Health Care Costs

The American dream tells us that if you wake up, go to work, work hard, and put in your time, you can live a decent and respectable life and care for you family. But high and rising health care costs are pushing the American dream out of reach for America's families. Stagnant wages and exorbitant health care costs mean that Americans can't afford to feed their family, keep a roof over their heads, or pay for heat in the winter.



30% of Americans say the cost of medical care interferes with their ability to pay for basic needs, like food, housing, and heat.

Between 1999 and 2016, the total cost of a family employer-sponsored health insurance plan rose from \$5,791 to \$18,142.



1999 2016



44% of the public report not seeing a doctor when they need to because the costs are too high.

Sources: See endnotes 2, 15, and 16 in *Consumers First: The Alliance to Make the Health Care System Work for Everyone — Call to Action* report.