

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**California Department of Managed Health Care Awards Grant to
Consumers Union to Improve Accountability and Transparency in
Health Plan Rate Setting**

(Sacramento) – The California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) today announced that it has awarded a grant to Consumers Union to bolster its health plan premium rate review program. The consumer group will provide consumer-focused feedback on health plan rate filings and develop innovative ways to increase public engagement in health plan rate review.

“This partnership will help bolster accountability and transparency in health plan rate setting,” said DMHC Director Brent Barnhart. “Consumers Union will not only provide in-depth input on health plan premium rate filings but will also help get more Californians engaged in how plans set those rates.”

Founded in 1936, Consumers Union is an independent, nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote a fair, just, and safe marketplace and to empower consumers to protect themselves. Consumers union is the policy and advocacy arm of Consumer Reports. Consumer Reports provides unbiased and trusted ratings and advice on thousands of products and services and has worked to educate and empower consumers to make more informed health-care decisions.

“We are eager to develop a long term strategy for engaging consumers in this process,” said Betsy Imholz, Special Projects Director for Consumers Union. “Shining a light on unreasonable rate increases, and educating the public on how their health insurance premiums are set, are crucial first steps in holding the health insurance industry accountable.”

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The \$225,000 grant to Consumers Union is funded through the federal Affordable Care Act.

In January 2011, a new state law gave the DMHC authority to review individual and small group health plan premium rate increases. To date, the DMHC has reviewed nearly 75 rate filings, representing more than 1,000 health plan products, and negotiated reductions in proposed increases that have saved Californians more than \$30 million. Although DMHC can declare a rate filing unjustified or unreasonable, the department does not have authority to approve or reject premium rates.

To learn about health care options and rights or get help filing health plan complaints or appeals, Californians can contact the DMHC Help Center at 1-888-466-2219 or by visiting www.HealthHelp.ca.gov.

The DMHC regulates managed care health plans, protects the rights of 21 million California enrollees, educates consumers on their health care rights and responsibilities, and preserves the financial stability of the managed health care system. Since 2000, the department has helped more than 1 million Californians resolve health plan problems through its Help Center.

Follow the DMHC on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/CADMHC>

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