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RHODE ISLAND PARTICIPATES IN NATIONWIDE DISCUSSION ON HEALTH CARE

Citizens' recommendations to be considered by Congress, White House

Washington, D.C. – The citizens of Rhode Island will participate in a dialogue on health care in America presented by the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. The community meeting will be held on **Monday, March 6, 2006**, from 5:00 pm - 9:00 pm at The Church of Holy Rosary, 17 Traverse Street, Providence, RI. A reception and onsite registration will begin at 4:30 pm. The Rhode Island Public Health Association is spearheading local recruitment efforts. Other organizations assisting in this endeavor include the Rhode Island Community Health Center Association, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI, Rhode Island Area Health Education Center and The Clarendon Group. The meeting is free and open to the public, but registration is requested. Registration is available at www.citizenshealthcare.gov or by calling 866-832-0372.

"Rhode Island citizens share the concerns of others throughout the nation about the need for a health care system that works for everyone," said Sharon Marable, MD, MPH, President of the Rhode Island Public Health Association. "This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone in our community to be a part of a national solution regarding health care."

The community meeting will feature a multimedia presentation that provides information on the nation's health care system including problems related to cost, quality, and access to care. This will be followed by more focused discussions in small groups. Participants will share their ideas about how to improve the health care system.

"This meeting represents an important opportunity to bring back a key voice to the health policy debate, that of every day Americans," said Richard Frank, a professor of health economics at Harvard University Medical School and a Working Group Member.

Community members, especially those unable to come to the meeting are urged to take advantage of several important online features designed to overcome physical and practical barriers to citizen participation. The Public Comment Center, Citizens' Blogs, and Discussion Forums, are found at www.citizenshealthcare.gov. They are all ways to enable a more inclusive public comment and debate so that citizens can share their opinions with one another and make their views known to the Working Group in order to strengthen the recommendations provided to the President and Congress.

The Working Group, a nonpartisan group authorized by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, is charged with listening to the views of the American people and developing recommendations for the President and Congress to provide U.S. citizens with "Health Care that Works for All Americans." The *Health Report to the American People*, was released in October and serves as a basis to engage the American people in a dialogue on health care access, cost and quality issues. The Working Group consists of 15 members --14 citizens of diverse backgrounds from across the country, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

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