



PROTECTING CONSUMER ACCESS TO DISCOUNT HEALTHCARE PROGRAMS

Consumer Health Alliance Honors Texas Insurance Commissioner

National Trade Association of Discount Health Care Programs Recognizes Leadership in Supporting Affordable Health Care Options For Texas Consumers

AUSTIN, Texas, March 11, 2013—At an event in Austin on January 10, the Consumer Health Alliance (CHA), the national trade association of discount health care programs, presented its Consumer Advocacy Award to Texas Insurance Commissioner Eleanor Kitman. The award recognized Commissioner Kitman's leadership in supporting affordable health care options for Texas consumers.

"Commissioner Kitman has earned a well-deserved reputation as a consumer watchdog," said CHA counsel Allen Erenbaum who presented the award. "She has greatly advanced the Texas Department of Insurance's mission by regulating companies fairly, promoting a competitive market to benefit consumers, and providing meaningful information to consumers. Regarding discount plans in particular, TDI under her leadership has ensured that company regulation is targeted to real problems and is practical for legitimate companies. And, there is more information about discount plans and their authorized marketers available on the TDI website than in any other state—transparency which benefits consumers and companies alike," said Erenbaum.

"These efforts have allowed Texas consumers to continue to enjoy easy access to affordable health care services and products offered by discount plans. In short, Commissioner Kitman's approach has been a model for the nation," added Erenbaum.

"Discount health care programs play an important role in making health care more affordable," said Kitman. "They are simple programs to understand and use. Consumers pay a fee and get access to discounts from participating providers. And best of all for a regulator, I haven't heard any complaints about them from my staff. I'm honored to receive this award," Kitman said.

About Discount Health Care Programs: Discount health care programs are non-insurance programs that offer consumers direct access to health care products and

services at discounted rates. Discount health care programs are offered by discount companies to consumers, insurance companies to subscribers, counties to residents, banks to customers, non-profit organizations to members, and employers to employees. The simplicity and value of these programs are enjoyed by millions of people across the country. CHA companies have more than 45 million participants in the U.S. today, including more than three million in Texas.

Discount health care programs began operating about 20 years ago, primarily to offer access at discounted rates to those ancillary health care services not typically covered by insurance plans. Services typically included dental, pharmacy, vision, chiropractic, and hearing. These ancillary benefits comprise about 95 percent of discount memberships. Legitimate discount health care companies always have made clear that the access they provide to these services is not insurance.

About the Consumer Health Alliance: In order to protect consumers' access to legitimate discount health care programs, leading discount health care companies joined together to form CHA in 2001. CHA is now the national trade association of discount health care programs.

CHA welcomes the opportunity to work with states on targeted laws and regulations that direct consumers toward legitimate programs and protect them from fraudulent ones. In this regard, CHA has worked with legislatures and regulators in about 25 states over the last few years. CHA also worked closely with the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) on the development of its 2006 model state legislation regulating discount health care programs. Discount health care programs are now regulated by 35 states.

For more information about CHA, visit www.consumerhealthalliance.org or contact Allen Erenbaum at allen@erenbaum.com.

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