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For Immediate Release:

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STATEMENT ON BICAMERAL AND BIPARTISAN SURPRISE BILLING LEGISLATION, “NO SURPRISES ACT,”

Washington, D.C. –

The National Coalition on Health Care (NCHC) applauds the bipartisan, bicameral “surprise billing” legislation released on Friday, December 12. **The National Coalition on Health Care has long called for this action.** John Rother, President of the Coalition, praised the bipartisan legislation as a necessary move to protect patients, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a step toward more affordable and transparent health care for all.

“Surprise bills threaten emergency room patients in particular with unaffordable and unfair expenses,” said John Rother, President of NCHC. “Congress is finally putting a stop to this abuse, requiring patients to be completely protected.”

Most importantly, **the bill would remove the patient from the dispute process.** Patients in emergency situations are especially vulnerable to the opaque and confusing nature of the health care system. The bill would prohibit surprise bills for all out-of-network emergency services, including air ambulance, and patients will pay in-network cost-sharing for these services. In addition, the bill would create safeguards such that providers and plans must give advanced notice of potential charges and network status.

Timely bills, not just a lack of surprises, is a key concern for the Coalition. Patients deserve clarity, especially when the care they receive could be out-of-network through no decision or fault of their own. NCHC urges Congress to ensure that these rules are enforced and clearly communicated. The bill rightfully considers how current incentives

in the system could introduce gaming – for all parties involved – to the arbitration system at the expense of the patient.

Lastly, beyond surprise billing specifically, the Coalition is pleased to see that the bill includes a grant program for **All Payer Claims Databases (APCDs)**. These databases are valuable tools for researching and evaluating efforts to improve the efficiency of the health care system. APCD funding and technical assistance is an important piece of the state-federal partnership to improve quality and lower costs.

We encourage both the House and Senate to pass this bill or a similar version by the year-end, to tangibly improve the affordability of health care for Americans during a public health crisis.

The Coalition produced an educational [primer](#) on surprise billing earlier this year.

About the Coalition: NCHC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, multi-stakeholder organization dedicated to promoting health care affordability and accessibility. The Coalition represents more than 80 participating organizations, including medical societies, businesses, unions, health care providers, faith-based organizations, pension and health funds, insurers, and groups representing consumers, patients, women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. Collectively, our organizations represent more than 100 million Americans.