

**Arise Citizens' Policy Project and Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc.**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

5/27/10

### ***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

For more information, contact: Anna Blair of ACPP at (334) 832-9060 or  
Vaughan Branch of Appleseed at (334) 263-0086

## **One in four Alabamians at risk for denial of coverage**

*Health care reform will protect Alabama's 956,000 non-elderly residents who have a pre-existing condition*

Nearly 1 million Alabamians under age 65 who have pre-existing health conditions will gain access to health care coverage under the newly enacted health care reform law, according to a report released today by the consumer health organization Families USA. These Alabamians – more than one in four of the state's non-elderly population – are among the 57.2 million people nationwide who could have faced discriminatory health coverage practices before the law passed.

Once health care reform takes full effect in 2014, these Alabamians will gain significant protections. The new law prohibits insurance companies from denying health coverage to people because of pre-existing conditions, from charging discriminatory premiums based on health status, and from excluding benefits that would treat their health conditions.

The report shows that, while individuals in all age groups in Alabama have pre-existing health conditions, the problem grows with age. Nearly one in five young adult Alabamians age 18 to 24 have a diagnosed pre-existing health condition that could lead to a denial of coverage. The portion climbs to two in five for the 45 to 54 age group and more than half for ages 55 to 64. The law will forbid coverage denials for children based on pre-existing conditions later this year, benefiting more than 91,000 Alabamians under age 18.

“Isn't the main purpose of the health care system to take care of people who are sick?” said Kimble Forrister, executive director of Arise Citizens' Policy Project. “For too long, the system has shut nearly a million Alabamians out of coverage because they have an existing health care need. The new law opens that door, creating a safer system for all.”

Income is no protection against an individual's having a pre-existing condition that could lead to a denial of coverage, and the nearly 1 million Alabamians with diagnosed pre-existing conditions range across all income levels. Similarly, individuals in every racial and ethnic group in Alabama have diagnosed pre-existing conditions that, absent reform, could lead to a denial of coverage.

“The health care reform debate was heated, but now we're beginning to see real-life benefits,” said John Pickens, executive director of Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc. “As these new protections hit home, Alabamians will welcome the greater peace of mind that guaranteed coverage brings.”

Read the full Alabama report here ([www.familiesusa.org](http://www.familiesusa.org)).

# # #

**Arise Citizens' Policy Project** is a nonprofit statewide citizens' organization comprising 150 congregations and community groups that promote public policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians.

**Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc.**, is a nonprofit, non-partisan legal advocacy organization that works to identify and address root causes of injustice and inequality in Alabama.