

MEDIA ADVISORY

IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 11, 2009

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ALABAMA APPLESEED RELEASES COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE OPTIONS FOR ALBAMA

Montgomery/Birmingham – The Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice released on Tuesday, February 10th a report on health insurance coverage options that would reduce, if enacted, the number of uninsured persons in Alabama. This report contains five separate reports by five teams of volunteer health care attorneys from Birmingham analyzing five remedial options to address the health access crisis. The study also contains the most current data about Alabama’s uninsured populations. The report was released at a workshop presentation at the February 10th Health Care Access Conference at Birmingham- Southern College sponsored by Alabama Arise (Arise Citizens’ Policy Project) and Alabama Appleseed.

“With the number of uninsured Alabamians having risen to over 600,000 (at 14% of our population) and with the current economic crisis causing further layoffs with the accompanying loss of health insurance for many, the issue of how to expand coverage for Alabama’s growing uninsured population could not be more timely or critical” said John Pickens, Executive Director of Alabama Appleseed. Mr. Pickens further said: “With President Obama now in office with his commitment to reform our health care system, the winds of change are blowing in Washington and during 2009 there likely will be some national reform enacted. If such national reform takes place, we here in Alabama must be ready to act to promote the state-specific changes such national reform undoubtedly will entail. This Appleseed Report helps us understand better the range of options that might be available to further expand health insurance coverage for the uninsured.”

The topics covered by the five reports contained in the Appleseed Report are: (1) A Medicaid expansion of the current provisions for Medicaid for Low Income Families (parents of Medicaid-eligible children); (2) Purchasing Pools; (3) Buy- In Plans (particularly related to Medicaid and the State Employees Insurance Program); (4) Pay or Play Plans; and (5) Federal tax-advantaged plans, such as Health Savings Accounts and Flexible Spending Plans. The five individual reports are intended to serve, not as the final and definitive work on any particular option, but as the basis for a more detailed and exhaustive analysis over the next two years by a wide-range of interested parties and advocates.

Appleseed’s Executive Director John Pickens concluded by saying: “The health and well-being, and the very lives, of thousands of Alabamians are dependent on the joint and collaborative efforts, by both public and private advocates in Alabama , to develop and implement effective solutions to make quality and affordable health insurance available to every Alabamian.”

An executive summary of the Alabama Appleseed report is attached. The full report is available at Alabama Appleseed’s website: www.alabamaappleseed.org.

Founded in 1999, Alabama Appleseed is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization that identifies significant needs in the state, tackles their root causes, and crafts practical, lasting solutions through legal advocacy, community involvement, and policy expertise.