



STATEMENT FOR
SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE
HEARING ON
“EXAMINING OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE: AN UPDATE FROM FEDERAL OFFICIALS”
MARCH 18, 2021

Thank you for holding this hearing with our nation’s leading public health officials. As the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee continues its oversight of issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to get Americans vaccinated, the Partnership for Employer-Sponsored Coverage (P4ESC) would like to highlight the important role employers and employment-based health coverage play in these efforts.

Vaccinating Americans against COVID-19 and getting our economy back on track are goals we share with the Committee, Congress, President Biden, and the nation. As organizations representing small, medium, and large businesses employing millions of hardworking Americans, P4ESC members have a vested interest in ensuring that mass vaccination efforts succeed, and our nation’s economy moves forward.

P4ESC is extremely grateful for the care our nation’s health professionals, doctors, nurses, nursing aides, and first responders have provided to Americans during the pandemic. We are also very thankful for the pharmacists, pharmacy aides, and volunteers staffing vaccination sites throughout the country that stand ready to help vaccinate millions of frontline workers and the general public.

As Congress works with the Biden Administration, and health professionals and facilities across the nation on vaccination efforts, P4ESC would like to you to take note of the following:

1. We welcome any opportunity to help in the public education campaign on vaccinations, including disseminating information to our member businesses and their employees, and provide input on policy development and compliance relief measures for employees and employers.
2. Employers are seeking clarification from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on their ability to offer employees incentives to vaccinate without running afoul of federal laws. Many employers have publicly announced their intent to provide employees with paid time off or monetary incentives to get vaccinated, and many others are contemplating such actions. Any assistance you could provide in requesting clarification from the EEOC would be appreciated.
3. COVID-19 has brought an unprecedented amount of uncertainty for employees and businesses. The employer-sponsored system has been a steadfast safety net for the millions who have suffered from COVID and the millions more receiving care for a host of health and wellness issues. As our nation continues to weather the public health crisis, P4ESC urges Congress to preserve and strengthen employment-based health coverage and work with employers to address the long-term health and economic issues.



P4ESC welcomes the opportunity to provide the Committee with operational insights on behalf of employers of all sizes. The employer-sponsored coverage has served as a vital safety net during the pandemic, and the backbone of our nation's health system for nearly eight decades.

While vaccination efforts continue to ramp up and there is a brighter light at the end of the tunnel, we remain concerned about the long-term effects of COVID-19 on our employees' health and fiscal constraints on both employees and employers. For those who have been diagnosed with COVID, little is known about the long-term health effects. Additionally, many Americans have forgone routine medical care and surgeries during the pandemic. Initial feedback we have received from businesses regarding future coverage issues, complexities, and costs include areas such as: actuarial considerations of COVID-related testing and treatments (as well as complexities related to mental health parity rules); self-funded and fully insured premium increases; increased cost of stop-loss insurance for self-funded employers; and risk pool changes. With the employer-sponsored coverage system's foundation being rooted in workforce policy and business operations, the COVID pandemic will leave an indelible mark on benefits planning and operations for many years.

Again, thank you for holding this important hearing. We look forward to continuing to work with Congress on vaccination and recovery efforts.

Sincerely,

American Health Policy Institute
American Hotel & Lodging Association
American Rental Association
Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.
Associated General Contractors of America
Auto Care Association
Business Group on Health
The Council of Insurance Agents & Brokers
The ERISA Industry Committee (ERIC)
FMI – The Food Industry Association
HR Policy Association
National Association of Health Underwriters
National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors
National Restaurant Association
National Retail Federation
Retail Industry Leaders Association
Society for Human Resource Management