

## **Majority of Georgia Residents Struggle to Pay for Health Care and Believe Elected Officials Should Address the Problems**

**ATLANTA – Oct. 14, 2021** – Consumer worry about health care affordability is well documented in the U.S., but now—for the first time—a new survey within Georgia reveals how affordability concerns and ideas for action play out across the state. The survey found that almost seven in 10 (68%) experienced health care affordability burdens in the past year. Even more (80%) are worried about affording health care in the future.

The survey of more than 950 Georgia adults was conducted from April 12, 2021 to May 3, 2021 by Altarum’s Healthcare Value Hub in partnership with Georgians for a Healthy Future.

Reported problems range from delaying going to the doctor (36%) to rationing medicine (38%). When asked about affording treatment for COVID-19, over half (56%) of Georgia respondents were worried or very worried. Residents of the East and Southwest regions of the state reported the highest health care affordability burdens in the state, with 80% and 81% of residents, respectively, experiencing worry.

“The survey data reveals the need and support for Georgia lawmakers to eliminate cost as a barrier to care for Georgians, protect Georgians from rising health care costs and require system-level changes so consumers can better tell what the true cost of their care will be,” said Laura Colbert, executive director of Georgians for a Healthy Future. “We are committed to leveraging this data with our state’s legislators, providers and others to inform action in the 2022 legislative session.”

Dissatisfaction with the current health care system is both statewide and bipartisan. Sixty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed that the health care system needs to change, and 56% of respondents identified health care as the priority issue the government should focus on in the next year. Respondents enthusiastically endorsed a number of government solutions, including:

- 87%—Make it easy to switch insurers if a health plan drops your doctor
- 86%—Show what a fair price would be for specific procedures
- 85%—Require hospitals and doctors to provide up-front cost estimates to consumers
- 84%—Require insurers to provide up-front cost estimates to consumers
- 81%—Expand health insurance options so everyone can get quality coverage

Altarum’s Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey (CHESS) is designed to elicit respondents’ unbiased views on a wide range of health system issues, including confidence using the health system, financial burden and views on fixes that might be needed. Altarum has conducted the CHESS in 16 states.

“Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, Georgia residents are critically concerned about health care affordability and believe their elected officials should act to address these problems. We found that even when respondents got the care they needed, half of Georgia adults (50%) struggled to pay the resulting bill,” said Amanda Hunt, director of Altarum’s Healthcare Value Hub. “Solutions received widespread support across party lines.”

When residents were asked about strategies to address health care concerns, they agreed in high numbers across party lines on various government solutions, including, but not limited to, expanding health care coverage options and requiring up-front cost estimates of health services to consumers.

The brief can be viewed at

<https://healthyfuturega.org/our-priorities/ensuring-value-for-health-care-consumers/health-care-costs/>.

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### **About Georgians For a Healthy Future**

Since 2008, Georgians for a Healthy Future has worked to build and mobilize a unified voice, vision, and leadership to achieve a healthy future for all Georgians. Our vision is of a day in which all Georgians have access to the quality, affordable health care they need to live healthy lives and contribute to the health of their communities. We do this by providing substantive health policy information to stakeholders, providing resources to help consumers become strong advocates and elevating the consumer experience to inform policy change. Read more at [healthyfuturega.org](http://healthyfuturega.org)

### **About Healthcare Value Hub**

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Healthcare Value Hub provides free, timely information about the policies and practices that address high health care costs and poor quality, bringing better value to consumers. The Hub is part of Altarum, a nonprofit organization with the mission of creating a better, more sustainable future for all Americans by applying research-based and field-tested solutions that transform our systems of health and health care.