**ACA Success Op-Ed Template for Coverage Advocates**

[Start with a consumer story to share one person’s experience and be sure to highlight the assistance you provided and link to how your help and the help provided by other enrollers helped consumers across your state or county.]

Two years ago, Susan Owens didn’t have health insurance. She went to work every day outside of Baltimore, Maryland, as a caregiver for a company that provides in-home care to elderly patients. Though working full time, her employer didn’t offer health care coverage and with her low hourly wages, Susan and her family couldn’t afford the premiums for private insurance.

One day, Susan injured her back lifting one of her patients from his wheelchair to his bed. Susan’s injury was so painful that she needed medical attention and was not able to work. With the loss of her income, the family had to struggle with bills and the situation only got worse when Susan learned she was going to require surgery. The family struggled to make ends meet as her medical bills piled up.

Millions of Americans have had experiences like Susan’s, and the Affordable Care Act was passed to ensure that people like her have access to health insurance or that a medical need wouldn’t bankrupt a family. Today Susan is enrolled in a health plan through Maryland’s health insurance Marketplace and is able to get care at an affordable price.

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For Levi Casas, sometimes just getting out of bed was exhausting. Although he’s decades younger, there were some days when he felt like he was 80 years old. Born and raised in Las Cruces, Levi worked a steady job until he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. After chemotherapy ravaged his system, Levi was no longer able to work. Without a job, he lost his health insurance. Soon he went from fighting cancer to fighting for access and affordable treatments that could save his life.

Fortunately, Levi was able to get the care he needed through new health care options. Today, with his cancer treatments are covered by Medicaid, the tumor has shrunk considerably and he is nearing the end of his chemo sessions.

Health care reform has given thousands of New Mexicans a new chance at a healthier life like Levi’s. More than 422,000 previously-uninsured people in New Mexico have new options for accessing high quality, affordable health care—either through Medicaid or the New Mexico Health Insurance Exchange (NMHIX).

Stories like this reflect what is happening across our state and the country. More people are insured, which means they are getting the care they need. That means more days at work, and fewer fears of medical bills they can’t pay. In other words, the Affordable Care Act is working, giving consumers access to quality and affordable care and the peace of mind that comes with it.

A recent Commonwealth Fund Survey found that 9.5 million more people have health insurance thanks to the ACA. In STATE alone XXXXX people enrolled in coverage and millions more are benefiting from new policies that protect them from unfair insurance company practices.

In-person assistance by community-based organizations contributed greatly to this success – making the enrollment process accessible and understandable for many people. These Navigators and assisters played a critical role, particularly for consumers with limited access to technology, low literacy skills, or language and cultural barriers. Navigators and assisters helped an estimated 10.6 million people across the country learn about their new health care options during open enrollment.

Further, with financial help available, millions now have quality health coverage at a price they can afford. XX percent of STATEians who bought coverage through the [State marketplace or HealthCare.Gov] received financial help.

Not only do more folks have coverage, they’re also putting it to use to get care for themselves and their families when they need it. Three out of five newly covered people received medical attention or prescriptions they couldn’t have accessed or afforded before.

When you ask people how they feel about being covered, it’s no surprise—they’re happy. Four out of five people say that they’re optimistic their new coverage will improve their ability to get the healthcare they need.

Here in [STATE], the numbers don’t lie. Thanks to the ACA, we have [number] more people covered through [Medicaid/state marketplace/federal marketplace/etc.]. [Number] more people can get a yearly physical without copay, or don’t have to worry about getting sick, or pay exorbitant premiums because they have a preexisting condition.

This is great news for our state. Ensuring our neighbors can access affordable, quality health care gives them the economic security of no longer being one accident or illness away from bankruptcy. Having more [STATEians] insured also benefits all of us. Instead of shouldering the cost of uncompensated care, we can keep health care costs in check and spend tax dollars on other priorities.

More and more people will be able to sign up for health insurance as the next open enrollment period nears. There are still folks like [name from initial story] out there and we have the opportunity to capitalize on our success and ensure quality, affordable health care for all of us.

[Include whatever ask is appropriate here, example below]

With [enrollment event/community forum/town hall] coming up [include date], now is the time for leaders in our community to rally behind affordable health coverage and ensure those who have yet to secure health insurance know what assistance is available for enrolling and paying for coverage.

*[One sentence bio on signer]*