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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Arizonans Have a Plan for Healthcare Change.

Citizens and stakeholders discover common ground and direction.

PHOENIX, AZ—With nearly 1 million uninsured and the rest of the state's population facing double-digit cost increases annually, Arizonans got together for four meetings across three cities to talk about change. They were pleasantly surprised to discover similar values and common priorities, and ultimately decided on three specific goals for getting the job of health care reform started:

1. Go directly to the public in efforts to shape a system that works for all Arizonans and reflects citizens' values and priorities.
2. Starting with children, phase in a stepped plan that will get all Arizonans into the system to share benefits and costs.
3. Improve the state's system of training medical professionals and care providers in order to meet the state's growing needs for health care.

“Given the opportunity to talk it through, it became clear to our citizens that the current system is stuck in the past,” continued Rissi. “Job-based insurance was not intended as the ideal or permanent answer back in the 1940's, and it is certainly an imperfect solution for today. Participants concluded that it makes better sense to build a more complete system that covers all of us. And they're ready to pioneer this system for Arizona's children now.”

These recommendations were first developed by three separate, randomly-selected citizen groups that met for a day of discussion and deliberation in Tucson, Phoenix and

Flagstaff. Business, civic and industry leaders then met with selected citizen representatives from the original groups to review and refine their conclusions.

Members of each group spent time sharing opinions, reviewing facts and listening to each other's objections. Balanced facts and a wide range of scenarios provided the basis for discussion that was enriched by varied backgrounds and a breadth of personal experiences. "Everyone was energized and optimistic," noted Jill Rissi, a researcher from project funder St. Luke's Health Initiatives. The recommendations include returning job-based insurance to its origins as a worker perk, giving employers an option – instead of an obligation – to provide extra coverage as an added benefit.

Arizona's legislators, health policy leaders and interested citizens can readily access details, insights and participant quotes on the St. Luke's Health Initiatives website. Both a summary and the complete research report are now available at www.slhi.org/publications/studies_research.

About SLHI

Established in 1995, St. Luke's Health Initiatives (SLHI) focuses on informing public policy and developing communities via a strength-based approach. As a public foundation, SLHI convenes available resources, advocates on issues, models successful organizational practices and provides developmental funding. For additional information, please visit www.slhi.org.

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