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**National Coalition on Benefits Urges Ways and Means
Committee to Preserve Role of Employers in Health Care Reform**

***Coalition Calls on Congress to Reform Health Care by Building on
Strength of Current Employee Health and Retirement Benefits***

WASHINGTON – The National Coalition on Benefits (NCB) today provided testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Ways and Means to demonstrate the importance of preserving and strengthening the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). Representing 180 associations and businesses, NCB’s testimony encouraged Congress to build on the success of the current employer-based health care system, reform the insurance market, and address the cost shifting from inadequate payment for public programs.

Nationwide, employer-sponsored health care plans provide health care coverage to more than 177 million Americans, and employers have a direct and real stake in the outcome of health reform efforts. Since 1999, employment-based health insurance premiums have increased 120 percent. Failure to improve the U.S. health care system means rising health care costs will threaten the viability of U.S. businesses of all sizes and put millions of American workers at risk.

Hewitt Associates, a global human resources consulting and outsourcing company, is a member of NCB and consults with many of its member organizations on health care strategy. Hewitt’s Global Health Management Leader Kenneth L. Sperling testified on behalf of NCB.

“Continuing to give employers the flexibility to create innovative health programs for their workforces must be a critical element of health care reform,” said Sperling. “NCB supports the employer-based system and the preservation of ERISA, which provides employers the ability to offer and maintain uniform benefit plans across multiple states.”

Sperling also discussed the evidence of cost shifting from public to private plans, which creates another major cost pressure for employers.

“The National Coalition on Benefits believes that meaningful health care reform must start by controlling spiraling health care costs. Encouraging employers to continue their role as voluntary sponsors of health plans for their employees benefits every American seeking access to quality, affordable care,” Sperling added. “Reforms that lead to lower health care costs will go a long way toward ensuring many Americans will continue to have the health care coverage they value.”

National Coalition on Benefits (www.coalitiononbenefits.org) is a coalition of associations and businesses of all sizes, sectors and regions formed to represent more than 170 million Americans who have health, retirement and other valuable benefits voluntarily provided by their employer under a nationally uniform framework.