



The Commonwealth Fund Launches National Task Force on Future Role of Employers in U.S. Health System

With half of U.S. population getting health insurance through an employer, Task Force aims to build blueprint for how employers can strengthen coverage and access to timely, affordable health care

NEW YORK, April 4, 2024 — The Commonwealth Fund announced today the creation of a national task force to examine the changes needed to improve employees' access to timely, affordable health care coverage. Half the U.S. population — 157 million people — rely on employer-sponsored health insurance. The Commonwealth Fund National Task Force on the Future Role of Employers in the U.S. Health System aims to build consensus on market incentives and regulatory changes needed to enhance health coverage in the workplace, ensure access to affordable health care, and improve population health and care delivery.

The nonpartisan task force is chaired by Peter Lee, J.D., senior scholar at Stanford University's Clinical Excellence Research Center, and Sherry Glied, Ph.D., dean of the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. Members include a diverse group of former health industry stakeholders, experts in employer coverage, and health care thought leaders from a broad range of institutions, such as the Urban Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, Harvard University, UCLA, and the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. The task force is staffed by the Commonwealth Fund's Sara Collins, Ph.D., and Lovisa Gustafsson, M.B.A.

"It's now 14 years since the passage of the Affordable Care Act — an ideal time for this national task force to examine the challenges and opportunities employers face in ensuring their employees have access to affordable, equitable, high-quality health care coverage, no matter who they are or where they are from," said Joseph R. Betancourt, M.D., M.P.H, president of the Commonwealth Fund. "Too often, high premiums and out-of-pocket costs deter low- and middle-income workers from enrolling in or using their employer health plans to get care. This Task Force will be laser focused on identifying policy options to tackle these barriers and strengthen workplace coverage."

The Commonwealth Fund National Task Force on the Future Role of Employers in the U.S. Health System will consider questions such as:

- What is the landscape of employer coverage in 2024? What do we know about employer premium contributions and terms of coverage, and about how consumers are faring by industry, firm size, and region?

EMBARGOED
NOT FOR RELEASE BEFORE
12:01 a.m. E.T.,
Thursday,
April 4, 2024

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About the Commonwealth Fund

The mission of the Commonwealth Fund is to promote a high-performing health care system that achieves better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency, particularly for society's most vulnerable, including low-income people, the uninsured, and people of color.

- What are employers' current purchasing practices and challenges do employers face in ensuring employees can get affordable coverage that allows access to timely, affordable, high-quality care?
- What are the range and type of policy proposals that might improve the affordability or quality of employer health insurance?

“The nation has made great strides in expanding coverage, but we need to be sure that the coverage most Americans get through their workplace is meeting their needs,” said Peter Lee, co-chair of the Task Force. “We hope the Task Force will help chart a path forward to ensure employers make the best purchasing and coverage decisions possible, fostering better health of those they cover and improvements in the broader health system.”

“While there have been significant changes in the nation’s health insurance landscape over the past 14 years, there has been little attention paid to the critical role that employers play, and will continue to play for the foreseeable future,” said Sherry Glied, co-chair of the Task Force. “The Task Force will consider ways to ensure employers are effective in allocating worker compensation among wages and benefits and selecting plans that reflect the preferences of their employees.”

The national task force will meet several times in 2024. Their deliberations will culminate in the release of a first-of-its-kind blueprint for the future role of employers in the U.S. health system, including detailed findings and recommendations, in 2025.

Additional information about the Commonwealth Fund National Task Force on the Future Role of Employers in the U.S. Health System can be found at: <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/about-us/employer-task-force>

FULL LIST OF TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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José Escarce, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Medicine and of Health Policy and Management, University of California, Los Angeles

Yvette Fontenot, M.P.P., Chief Executive Officer, Impact Health Policy Partners

Paul Fronstin, Ph.D., Director of Health Benefits Research, Employee Benefit Research Institute

Robert Galvin, M.D., M.B.A., Former Chief Executive Officer of Equity Healthcare, The Blackstone Group

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