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**Statement of Chuck Bell, Programs Director  
Consumers Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports*  
October 29, 2007**

I am very pleased to be here with Attorney General Cuomo, and representatives of Cigna and the American Medical Association, on this landmark day for consumers in New York and nationally. My name is Chuck Bell, and I am the Programs Director for Consumers Union, the publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine, based in Yonkers, NY.

I am appearing here today both for Consumers Union and on behalf of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project, a broad national coalition of consumer, labor and employer organizations. The Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project works to ensure that all Americans will have access to sound, reliable, publicly reported health care performance information about physicians, doctors, and medical treatments. We believe that measuring and reporting physician performance and quality of care is critical to improving health care for all Americans, including New Yorkers. We are particularly appreciative of the Attorney General's willingness to work closely with this broad coalition in crafting a solution that is in the best interests of consumers.

Consumers have said loud and clear that they want better information to help them make informed decisions about their doctors and the quality of care they receive. In addition, the public reporting and measurement of quality information is a very important tool in its own right. If you can measure a gap in performance, you can begin to close that gap. Public reporting helps improve the quality of care that is delivered, and ensure that our health care dollars are spent efficiently and effectively.

To ensure trustworthy public reporting of physician performance, all sides agree that we need to have clear standards and valid statistical methods. And these measures and reporting practices must be fully transparent to consumers and doctors alike.

Insurance companies can potentially play a very helpful role in the reporting process. They routinely collect substantial information about the quality of care delivered by physicians that could be very useful to consumers and employers. However, it is vital that this information be measured and reported in a fair and accurate way. Insurance companies that publish physician performance information must make public their methods, and be publicly accountable.

The agreement being announced today will enable the improved public reporting of physician quality measures to go forward in New York state on all fronts. It creates a trusted framework and a national precedent for an improved reporting system that can garner the support of consumers, physicians and insurers across the board, and spread across the entire marketplace.

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This agreement incorporates essential principles that we believe should be included in any insurer or health plan-sponsored physician performance reporting program. It will:

- Ensure that measurement is a transparent process so that both consumers and physicians can understand the basis upon which performance is being measured and reported.
- Ensure that measurement is based on sound national standards and methodology.
- Enable consumers to make more informed decisions based on both quality and cost, by including adequate guidance about how to use the information and disclosing any limitations in the data.
- Provide physicians with information that helps them improve the quality of care they provide.
- Ensure that physicians have adequate notice and opportunity to correct any errors. No surprises. No black boxes.
- Ensure that both consumers and physicians have input into the measurement process and how results are reported. This will help ensure that information is meaningful to consumers.

Again, I want to commend Attorney General Andrew Cuomo for his willingness to work with all parties to reach this agreement. Consumers Union and the broad array of labor, consumer and employer groups participating through the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project were pleased to have the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Attorney General to ensure that this agreement truly meets the needs of consumers while also improving quality. I want to thank Cigna for its willingness to publicly embrace this agreement, and bring its process for evaluating ranking physicians squarely into the sunlight -- a step that we hope every insurer and health plan will take.

We believe this agreement provides a national model and framework that should be emulated across the entire marketplace. If you are an insurer or health plan, and you are reporting physician quality information to the public, consumers want to know that your process and data collection procedures are sound, transparent and valid. We urge other insurers and health plans to review the features of this agreement, and to adopt these principles to guide their own quality reporting programs.

Thank you. I'll be happy to take your questions at the appropriate time.

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