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New Research from EBRI:

**EBRI's 2014 Health and Voluntary Workplace Benefits Survey:
Workers' Ratings of Health Care System Continue to Fall**

WASHINGTON—Although American workers rank their own health care highly, their opinion of the overall U.S. health care system is low and continues to fall, according to a new report by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI).

The 2014 Health and Voluntary Workplace Benefits Survey (WBS), finds that when asked to rate the health care system, a majority of workers (61 percent) describe it as poor (29 percent) or fair (32 percent), up 6 percentage points from 55 percent in 2013. One-quarter (27 percent) consider it good, while only a small minority rate it as very good (10 percent) or excellent (1 percent).

Dissatisfaction with the health care system appears to be focused primarily on cost. In contrast to the ratings for the health care system overall, workers' ratings of their own health plans continue to be generally favorable: One-half of those with health insurance coverage are extremely or very satisfied.

While the "poor" ranking varies from year to year, EBRI research has found it has grown significantly over time. The 2013–2014 WBS and the 1998–2012 Health Confidence Survey find that the percentage of workers rating the health care system as poor more than doubled between 1998 and 2006 (rising from 14 percent to 32 percent). While that percentage fell between 2006 and 2013, it jumped to 29 percent in 2014.

Paul Fronstin, director of EBRI's Health Research and Education Program and co-author of the report, noted the WBS reveals that most Americans rank health care as the second-most pressing in the United States today (after the economy, but ahead of the federal budget deficit, education, and unemployment). But "the overall national opinion of the national health care system is bad and getting worse," Fronstin said.

EBRI's trend analysis finds that the percentage of workers rating the health care system as poor more than doubled between 1998–2006 (rising from 14 percent to 32 percent). That improved slightly between 2006–2013, but in 2014. The most recent findings come from the 2013–2014 EBRI/Greenwald & Associates Workplace Benefits Survey (WBS), with longer-term trends measured in the 1998–2012 EBRI/Greenwald & Associates Health Confidence Survey (HCS).

Other findings in the new EBRI survey:

Pre- and post-PPACA: Confidence about various aspects of today's health care system has also remained fairly level before and after the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). According to the 2014 WBS, nearly one-half (47 percent) of workers report being extremely or very confident that they are able to get the treatments they need, a third (33 percent) say they are somewhat confident and 20 percent are not too or not at all confident.

Choices in care: Confidence in having enough choices about who provides medical care also is fairly steady between 2013 and 2014. In 2014, 4 in 10 workers (38 percent) are extremely or very confident that they have enough choices about who provides their medical care, about a third are somewhat confident, and just over a quarter are not too or not at all confident.

The future: But confidence drops as workers look to the future. While 47 percent of workers indicate they are extremely or very confident about their ability to get the treatments they need today, only 30 percent are confident about their ability to get needed treatments during the next 10 years, and just 19 percent are confident about this once they are eligible for Medicare.

These and other findings are contained in the 2014 WBS, co-sponsored by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) and Greenwald & Associates. The full report, "2014 Health and Voluntary Workplace Benefits Survey: Most Workers Continue to be Satisfied With Their Own Health Plan, but Growing Number Give Low Ratings to Health Care System," is published in the September *EBRI Notes*, online at www.ebri.org. The survey was underwritten by nearly one dozen organizations.

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