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Pennsylvania Residents' Top Concern for their Policymakers? Healthcare Affordability; Strong Support for Government Action Across Party Lines

In a period of great political divisiveness, Pennsylvania adults are united around one topic—the need for government action to address healthcare issues, especially affordability.

A survey of more than 1,150 Pennsylvania adults, conducted from Oct. 30, 2020 to Dec. 10, 2020, revealed that Pennsylvania residents see government as the key stakeholder that needs to act to address health system problems. Moreover, addressing healthcare problems trumps other issues that Pennsylvanians want their elected representatives to work on.

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to rank the top three issues the government should address in the upcoming year. Healthcare was the most frequently cited issue, with 67% of respondents selecting it as a top three issue, exceeding seven other options (see Table 1). The economy/joblessness was a close second, with 66% of respondents selecting it as one of their top three.

Table 1
Top Issues for Government to Work On

ISSUES GOVERNMENT SHOULD ADDRESS	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WHO SELECTED ISSUE AS ONE OF THE "TOP 3" ISSUES GOVERNMENT SHOULD ADDRESS IN THE COMING YEAR
HEALTHCARE	67%
ECONOMY/JOBLESSNESS	66%
TAXES	43%
ENVIRONMENT/ENERGY	28%
IMMIGRATION	23%
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	17%
COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION/STUDENT LOAN DEBT	17%
FOREIGN POLICY	14%

Source: 2020 Poll of Pennsylvania Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

When asked specifically about their *healthcare* priorities, 51% of respondents selected “Addressing high healthcare costs, including prescription drug costs” as one of the top 3 issues they want policymakers to address (see Table 2). Eighteen percent cited affordability as the *number one* issue they want policymakers to address. The next most important issue (preserving consumer protections) was identified as a top three issue by 40% of respondents and was the top priority for 14% of respondents.

Moreover, support for some government actions was high, regardless of the respondent's political affiliation (see Table 3).

Table 2
Top Healthcare Priorities for Government to Work On

HEALTHCARE ISSUES GOVERNMENT SHOULD ADDRESS	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WHO SELECTED ISSUE AS ONE OF THE "TOP 3" ISSUES GOVERNMENT SHOULD ADDRESS
ADDRESS HIGH HEALTHCARE COSTS, INCLUDING PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS	51%
PRESERVE CONSUMER PROTECTIONS PREVENTING PEOPLE FROM BEING DENIED COVERAGE OR CHARGED MORE FOR HAVING A PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITION	40%
GET HEALTH INSURANCE TO THOSE WHO CANNOT AFFORD COVERAGE	31%
IMPROVE MEDICARE (COVERAGE FOR SENIORS) AND THOSE WITH SERIOUS DISABILITIES	30%
REFINE OR MODIFYING THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT/OBAMACARE	25%
IMPROVE MEDICAID (COVERAGE FOR LOW INCOME EARNERS)	21%
REPEAL THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT/OBAMACARE	19%
IMPLEMENT MEDICARE FOR ALL/SINGLE-PAYER HEALTH COVERAGE	18%
MAKE THE QUALITY OF DOCTORS MORE TRANSPARENT	14%
MAKE THE QUALITY OF HOSPITALS MORE TRANSPARENT	14%
SECURE FUNDING FOR RESEARCH INTO CAUSES OF AND CURES FOR SPECIFIC DISEASES	13%
ADDRESS WOMEN'S HEALTH	7%

Source: 2020 Poll of Pennsylvania Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

Table 3
Percent Who Agreed/Strongly Agreed, by Political Affiliation

SELECTED SURVEY QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS	TOTAL	GENERALLY SPEAKING, DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS...		
		REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRAT	NEITHER
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE IT EASY TO SWITCH INSURERS IF A HEALTH PLAN DROPS YOUR DOCTOR	93%	93%	94%	91%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD EXPAND HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS SO THAT EVERYONE CAN AFFORD QUALITY COVERAGE	93%	90%	95%	94%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SHOW WHAT A FAIR PRICE WOULD BE FOR SPECIFIC PROCEDURES	92%	91%	94%	92%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD AUTHORIZE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION TO PREVENT PRICE GOUGING OR UNFAIR PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE HIKES	92%	93%	91%	91%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE PATIENTS CAN'T BE CHARGED OUT-OF-NETWORK PRICES IF THEY ENCOUNTER AN OUT-OF-NETWORK PROVIDER THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN	92%	91%	93%	92%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REQUIRE INSURERS TO PROVIDE UPFRONT COST ESTIMATES TO CONSUMERS	91%	92%	94%	86%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REQUIRE HOSPITALS AND DOCTORS TO PROVIDE UP FRONT PATIENT COST ESTIMATES	91%	92%	93%	89%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THE COST OF WIDELY NEEDED VACCINES ARE AFFORDABLE FOR ALL	91%	88%	93%	91%

Source: 2021 Poll of Pennsylvania Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey

Pennsylvania policymakers should not ignore this unambiguous call for action by state residents. The high burden of healthcare affordability, along with high levels of support for change, suggest that elected leaders and other stakeholders need to make addressing these consumer concerns a top priority.

For survey methodology and full report, please see [Pennsylvania Residents Struggle to Afford High Healthcare Costs; COVID Fears Add to Support for a Range of Government Solutions Across Party Lines](#), Healthcare Value Hub, Data Brief No. 89 (February 2021).



This survey was conducted for the Community Voices for Health project, supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and in collaboration with Public Agenda. For more information on Community Voices for Health, visit www.communityvoicesforhealth.org.

ABOUT ALTARUM'S HEALTHCARE VALUE HUB

With support from Arnold Ventures and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Healthcare Value Hub provides free, timely information about the policies and practices that address high healthcare costs and poor quality, bringing better value to consumers. The Hub is part of Altarum, a nonprofit organization with the mission of creating a better, more sustainable future for all Americans by applying research-based and field-tested solutions that transform our systems of health and healthcare.

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