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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Wyoming Insurance Commissioner Warns Wyoming Consumers About Short-term & Limited Health Plans

With just days remaining in the 2016 Health Insurance Open Enrollment period, Wyoming Insurance Commissioner, Tom Glause, reminds consumers to look closely at the health insurance plans they consider and weigh the benefits that the plans offer. Sunday, January 31 is the deadline for purchasing 2016 individual health insurance plans through the Marketplace at: www.healthcare.gov.

Commissioner Glause warns that consumers should do their homework, especially if they are considering limited benefit or short-term medical plans. **“Many people may only consider the monthly costs, but these plans may end up costing you more in the end,”** said Glause.

All plans offered through www.healthcare.gov are termed major medical insurance or qualified health plans (QHP) that meet the requirements under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). These QHP policies offer coverage for preventative care and treatment of pre-existing conditions with no lifetime or annual maximums.

While short-term or limited benefit medical plans may be a good choice for some consumers, such as those seeking temporary stopgap coverage between open enrollment periods, they differ from major medical insurance plans. Short-term plans set lifetime or yearly dollar limits, fail to pay for preventative health care, exclude many accidental injuries and care of pre-existing conditions. Limited benefit plans, as the name suggests, offer narrow coverages, often for a specific type of injury or illness or for a short duration of time. They also do not guarantee renewal, putting Wyomingites at further risk should they suffer injury or illness that are not within the narrow scope of these plans.

And, people who buy these plans will still have to pay a tax penalty for failing to have the minimum coverage required by federal law. In 2016, that penalty is \$695 per adult or 2.5 percent of your gross income – whichever is higher.

“The penalty could come as a surprise for some who may have been told that short-term or limited benefit plans would meet the federal health insurance requirement,” Glause said.

Glause said all plans offered through www.healthcare.gov meet the ACA requirements, and it is the only website that offers tax credits and subsidies to those with qualifying income levels to help offset the premium and other out-of-pocket costs. So far in the current open enrollment period, 93 percent of Wyomingites getting coverage through www.healthcare.gov will qualify for those tax credits or cost-sharing reductions.

If consumers are considering plans sold outside of www.healthcare.gov they should ask the following questions:

- Is renewal of the insurance plan guaranteed?
- Does the plan expressly state there is **not** a lifetime or annual payout limit?
- Does the plan cover pre-existing conditions?
- Does the plan cover the “minimum essential benefits”?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” the plan does not meet the minimum threshold of coverage needed to avoid a personal income tax penalty under the Affordable Care Act.

Consumers should ask if the person selling the plan is a licensed insurance agent in Wyoming and then ask for their license number.

The current period of open enrollment under the ACA ends at midnight (Pacific Time) on Sunday, Jan. 31. To enroll in a plan that meets the minimum requirements under the ACA, go to www.healthcare.gov or see your insurance agent. Those who seek one-on-one assistance to enroll can find a list of people trained to help navigate www.healthcare.gov by contacting Enroll Wyoming or dialing Wyoming 2-1-1.