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# Americans want more health care choices

A public option for health insurance doesn't have the support some would like to think it has and isn't patient-centered, says James Lansberry, vice president of Samaritan Ministries International.

A key question in a June 12-15 NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll asks respondents how important it is to have a choice between a public option and private health insurance. The so-called "public option" has been offered in several introduced and potential bills in Congress.

Seventy-six percent answered "extremely important" or "quite important." A union claimed that means overwhelming support for a government-run insurance program.

But it doesn't, Lansberry says. In fact, in a later question, 42 percent of respondents said a public option would limit choices that "should be made instead by patients and doctors."

"Giving people a choice is what 76 percent of those surveyed are in favor of—not the public plan in general," he says. "I believe that if you asked, 'How important do you feel it is to give people a choice of both an employer-provided plan and a private plan that employees own that isn't tied to their jobs,' you'd get at least as high of an answer.

"American people want choices."

Any changes in health care must be patient-centered, according to Lansberry.

"Patient-centered health options like health savings accounts and health care sharing ministries are much better ways to fix health care than a 'public option' that quickly becomes the 'only option,'" Lansberry says. "We need more choices, not fewer. As the survey indicates, a public option will give us fewer choices."

Samaritan Ministries offers just such a choice. The health care sharing ministry, founded in 1994, is an alternative to health insurance, offering members the opportunity to directly bear one another's financial burdens.

It includes more than 13,500 member households around the world.

For more information about SMI or to contact James Lansberry, call 1-888-268-4377.

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