



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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LOS ANGELES and NEW YORK CITY-- Actors' Equity Association (Actors' Equity), the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) and Screen Actors Guild (SAG) today announced an unprecedented joint health care survey of their members nationwide.

Administered by the Health Information Resource Center of The Actors' Fund of America, the survey is designed to gather precise data on the health insurance and health care needs of members of all three unions across the country. All responses are anonymous and will be used as compiled demographics to address health insurance and health care issues for union members.

All union members are asked to go to the site and take a few minutes to complete the survey:

www.zplink.com/healthcare/

"Affordable and accessible health care is vitally important to our members because of the high costs associated with health insurance and because of the episodic nature of our business," said Patrick Quinn, President of Actors' Equity Association. "By completing this survey our members will be taking a very personal and important step in addressing this national problem. It will assist all the unions to craft solutions to this crisis."

The unions are urging every member to complete the online survey to help them assess their members' health care needs. Special attention will be paid to data collected from those members whose earnings fall below the threshold requirements for participation in the unions' health plans.

The rising costs of health care to all three unions' plans have necessitated a sharp increase in qualification requirements, leaving an increasing number of their members without coverage. The three performer unions have been working closely to develop solutions. The collective data from the survey will better allow SAG, AFTRA and Actors' Equity to negotiate for affordable large-scale health care services with insurance carriers as well as push legislators to look at reforms.

In 2003, at the suggestion of the SAG Health Care Safety Net Committee, the three unions formed the Performers Health Care Council (PHCC), composed of member volunteers and staff from all three organizations as well as insurance professionals. Meetings were held at The Actors' Fund of America's Health Insurance Resource Center, with working groups in both New York and Los Angeles. Since then, the Council, led by Chairman Randall Kahn in Los Angeles and Vice Chairman Rhoda Pauley in New York, has been working with all four organizations to better coordinate activities, increase the options available and communicate them to union members.

There are a number of insurance and discount health programs available to professionals in the entertainment industry, but these only meet the needs of a minority of uninsured union members. "We have heard our members loud and clear. The unions and guilds must find viable, affordable alternatives for members who have lost, or failed to qualify for, union benefits," said SAG President Melissa Gilbert. "Too many SAG members are unable to qualify for union insurance and we must find real, viable alternative plans to protect them. This survey was developed and funded by our unions in order to assess the needs of our members, and to provide insurance carriers with more detailed statistics to structure those options."

The online survey, which takes less than ten minutes to complete, is comprised of questions regarding types of coverage, urgent needs, demographics, and personal/family status. All information is kept

confidential and strictly private. And members may skip a question if they find it too personal. Members without Internet service may use kiosks at union offices or may obtain a hard copy at any union office, at any office of the AFTRA-SAG Federal Credit Union in LA, Actors Federal Credit Union in New York, any office of The Actors' Fund of America or at The Audition Space in New York. The cut-off date for participation is July 18.

"There is a national health care crisis that goes well beyond our unions and our union-sponsored health plans," explained AFTRA National President John P. Connolly. "In the absence of any will to implement a national solution, and seeing none on the immediate horizon, we must do everything we can to help our members obtain the most affordable, highest quality health care available. That is why AFTRA is working closely with the National Coalition on Health care to force this crisis back to the center of our society's discussion, and with The Actors' Fund of America Affordable Health Care Project."

"And it's why I am so grateful and proud of PHCC Chairman Randall Kahn and our fellow members who created the Council. Affordable health care for all professional performers will not be an easy problem to solve, but we are committed to making progress, and the results of this survey will give us more tools to use in that quest. That's why we're asking every union member to participate."

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