

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Vincent Eng

+1 703 981 6636

media@healthlaw.org

Washington, DC - The National Health Law Program (NHeLP) welcomes today's ruling in the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, upholding the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The ACA includes a significant expansion of Medicaid, one that will improve access to care for working poor and chronically ill people in particular.

"We are pleased with the court's decision. The ACA has already improved the lives of millions of Americans," said Emily Spitzer, executive director of NHeLP. "This decision will help ensure Medicaid coverage and eligibility to over 16 million people."

In a 2-1 decision, Judge Laurence H. Silberman, affirmed the lower court's ruling, finding that the ACA's individual mandate -- the requirement that nearly all persons have health insurance -- is within Congress' powers. Notably, Judge Brett Kavanaugh's dissent disagreed with the conclusion, without taking a position on the merits of the law, stating that the case lacks standing until the law takes effect in 2014.

"NHeLP has been actively involved in implementation of the law and has been carefully monitoring challenges to the ACA in our courts," said Jane Perkins, NHeLP legal director. "Today's decision was the second appellate court that upheld the constitutionality of the ACA and it's becoming clear that the earlier 11th Circuit decision is an outlier in the legal analysis of the law."

This past August, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals held the ACA's individual mandate unconstitutional, but severable from the rest of the law. Judge Silberman's decision today, however, joins the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals' decision [Judge Jeffrey Sutton filed a concurring opinion] in upholding the constitutionality of the ACA. The U.S. Supreme Court is considering this week whether to resolve conflicting rulings over the law's requirement that nearly all Americans buy health care insurance.

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Founded in 1969, the National Health Law Program works with and on behalf of limited-income people, people with disabilities, and children to improve their access to quality health care and to enforce their legal rights to health. NHeLP works with courts, government agencies, and Congress to ensure quality health care for the most vulnerable members of our society.

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