



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 5, 2008

CONTACT:
Sue Walitsky 202-224-4524 or
202-320-0819 (cell)

CARDIN TELLS OPM TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO PROTECT FEDERAL WORKERS FROM UNPRECEDENTED INCREASES IN BLUE CROSS-BLUE SHIELD COPAYS

Federal Employees Health Plan Open Season ends Monday

Washington, DC – With just one business day left before the end of Open Season for the Federal Employees Health Plan, U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) released the following statement regarding costly changes to the FEHP Blue Cross-Blue Shield (BCBS) Standard Option health plan, the most popular choice for health plans among federal employees:

“Time is running out for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to fulfill its obligation to protect the interests of federal employees and retirees by withdrawing their approval of Blue Cross Blue Shield’s 2009 Standard Option Health Plan. OPM, together with Blue Cross Blue Shield, must take action immediately, before employees are locked into a health care plan for the coming year that could add thousands of dollars to employee costs for out-of-network surgeries. Under the 2009 plan, enrollees now will be responsible for the first \$7,500 in surgery charges from physicians not in the Blue Cross Blue Shield network.

“I call on OPM Acting Director Michael Hager to go back to the drawing board with Blue Cross-Blue Shield and quickly craft a responsible health plan proposal for 2009 that will provide meaningful coverage for all covered services to federal employees and retirees.

“Open season for the Federal Employees Health Plan (FEHP) ends Monday, December 8. Because health plan choices automatically renew from year-to-year, a major change in out-of-pocket costs for patients facing surgery would be a catastrophic surprise for individuals dealing with a major health issue. This is unacceptable and jeopardizes access to care.”

###