

Patient-centered health care? The fight to change our disempowering system

*featuring Anthony Wright,
Executive Director, Families USA*



This time on Code WACK!

The fight for affordable, accessible health care in the U.S. has gone on for decades. Who's in the fight to win solutions that improve health care for everyone? What policies are they working on?

Today we're featuring the Washington DC-based [Families USA](#), a leading national nonpartisan voice for healthcare consumers. We welcome their new executive director, **Anthony Wright**, who previously served for 22 years as executive director of [Health Access California](#). This is the first episode in a two-part series with Anthony Wright.

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WE DISCUSS

Tell us about yourself and how you became interested in health policy?

"My name is Anthony Wright. I'm the new executive director of Families, USA, a leading voice for healthcare consumers working in Washington DC on the goal of quality, affordable, equitable healthcare for all Americans. I come to this work after a quarter century career of working at the state level on health consumer advocacy for the last 22 years as the head of Health Access California...

"...I come to this work as somebody who has my own experience with these issues. I was, you know, a kid, a child of an Ecuadorian immigrant mom on one side, and an air conditioning technician for my dad. I was uninsured for parts of my growing up.

"I remember the strain of hospital bills, which are typically the biggest bill anybody will ever get in their entire life. So I have that experience.

"It doesn't matter what your background is, healthcare matters for you and your family. It is a major source of financial insecurity for many people. And it is something that if you're trying to engage people to be part of the policymaking and political process, health care is a major and important way to engage them because those issues are so central to not just their health, but to their financial viability moving forward." - **Anthony Wright**

Tell us about the work of Families USA.

"We work toward the goal of quality, affordable, equitable healthcare for all Americans ... We have a long and distinguished history of working on health reform and trying to expand coverage, whether it be for children or for the uninsured and [for] all Americans, whether it's [CHIP](#) [Children's Health

Insurance Program] or the Affordable Care Act, or numerous other efforts and reforms.

“But we also work on the issues around value, making sure that the cost is contained and affordable for people and that we're getting value for our dollars. So it's not just a lower cost, but improved quality, and equity, to make sure that healthcare is available and accessible for everybody regardless of ... their circumstances...” - **Anthony Wright**

Why focus on patients' perspectives in your work?

“There's lots of groups that represent doctors and drug companies, hospitals and health plans. **Families USA** is one of the leading groups that represents patients and the public,..because at the end of the day, that's the point of the healthcare system.

“Patients are not just another stakeholder. They're the point of the healthcare system. And they should be central to the conversation about how we reform and change and improve our healthcare system going forward...” - **Anthony Wright**

Helpful Links

[Families USA, The Voice for Healthcare Consumers](#)

[Health Access California](#)

[Putting Patient Concerns on the Policy Agenda; The Need for a Unified, Independent Patient Lobby, *Voices in Bioethics, Columbia University*](#)

[Americans' Challenges with Health Care Costs, *KFF*](#)

Episode Transcript

Read the [episode transcript](#).

Guest Biography - Anthony Wright

[Anthony E. Wright](#) (He, Him) is Families USA's Executive Director. Before joining the organization, he served 22 years as Executive Director of Health Access California, the statewide health care consumer advocacy coalition. Under Wright's leadership, Health Access California led state efforts to win patient protections, fight budget cuts, invest in the safety net, expand coverage, and advance equity and prevention.

He led California's coalition effort to help pass and later defend the Affordable Care Act, and for state policies to implement and improve the law to attain the biggest drop of the uninsured rate in the nation. He was responsible for numerous successful health care advocacy efforts to pass critical health reforms—such as nation-leading laws to stop surprise medical bills, ensure timely access to care, stop hospitals overcharging, and expand Medicaid regardless of age, assets, or immigration status.

A consumer advocate and community organizer quoted widely in state and national media, Wright's background also includes working for New Jersey Citizen Action, the Center for Media Education, The Nation magazine, and at the White House in Vice President Al Gore's office. Raised in the Bronx, he graduated from Amherst College magna cum laude in both English and Sociology.

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