

For Immediate Release
December 4, 2008

Contact: Gina Bowers (202) 288-0257

CVS Treats Minority Communities Unequally According to New Study by CtW

New report details discriminatory practices in store location, services, theft prevention at nation's largest drugstore chain

Washington, D.C. – The CVS Caremark Corporation is coming under fire today as civil rights groups react to the results of an in-depth investigation into the drug store chain's failure to provide equal and fair access to its stores and services, as well as evidence of questionable product quality control, overcharging, lax privacy protection and consumer safety issues at CVS stores.

The study, titled ***Cure CVS: From high prices to low quality, CVS is failing our communities***, is available at www.CureCVSNow.org. It is the result of a fourteen month investigation of CVS's retail operations, including extensive surveying of stores in many of the company's largest markets of operations.

CVS fails to provide equal access: In the metropolitan New York area, CVS locates four times as many stores per person in majority white neighborhoods than in areas where people of color make up the majority of residents. There are 60 percent more CVS stores per person in majority white Greater Los Angeles communities than in areas with a majority of residents of color.

CVS operates four times as many stores per person in the wealthiest areas of metro New York, or where the median household income is over \$80,000 annually, as in the least, where the median household income is under \$40,000 annually. There are twice as many CVS stores per person in the wealthiest areas of Greater Los Angeles as there are in the least wealthy. In contrast, Walgreens and Rite Aid actually locate more stores per person in less affluent areas across the country.

CVS is far more likely to allocate time- and money-saving conveniences like 24 hour stores and in-store medical clinics to, majority-white neighborhoods and higher-income communities.

"CVS's discriminatory practices are hurting our communities" **Hazel Dukes, NAACP** New York state chapter president said at a demonstration held this morning outside the CVS on 42nd Street in Manhattan's Times Square. "CVS is failing to provide minorities with equal access to medicine and community-based medical services here in New York and across the country."

Demonstrations, like the one in Manhattan, took place outside CVS stores today coast to coast from Los Angeles to Detroit and Boston to Philadelphia.

"CVS is treating us unequally," **Rev. Eric Lee**, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Los Angeles said at a demonstration outside one of the few CVS pharmacies in South Los Angeles. "CVS says they are 'for all the ways you care' but what the study shows is that CVS does not care about people of color."

Unsanitary CVS stores in communities of color and lower-income areas: In the metro New York area, Greater Philadelphia, and Greater Detroit, CVS stores in less affluent areas and in areas where people of color are a majority have been more likely to violate local food safety regulations, and store inspections in those areas were more likely to reveal evidence of vermin.

In addition to under-serving residents in low-income communities and areas where people of color live, CVS also has a troubled track record regarding customer safety, overcharging at the cash register and selling expired infant formula, milk, eggs and over-the-counter medications.

CVS sells expired products: A survey of New York City CVS stores found expired infant formula at 18 stores or 23% of stores surveyed. A survey of Greater Los Angeles CVS stores found expired infant formula at 106 stores (37% of visited CVS stores stocking infant formula in unlocked displays) and expired dairy products at 36 stores (12% of visited CVS stores stocking milk and eggs).

In June 2008, the Attorneys General of both New York and California demanded that CVS stop offering expired infant formula, milk and medications for sale.

CVS is the nation's largest drug store chain, operating 6,800 stores nationwide. CVS Caremark Corporation is the nation's largest source of prescription drugs.

Change to Win is a six million member partnership of seven unions founded in 2005 to represent workers in the industries and occupations of the 21st century economy. Change to Win is committed to restoring the American Dream for a new generation of workers – wages that can support a family, affordable health care, a secure retirement, and opportunity for the future.

###