

Health Care

Background & Problem:

Federal health care reform requirements to purchase health care coverage will reduce the number of uninsured nationally as well as in the state of Washington. However, the federal law includes very few tangible items that will actually reduce the cost of health coverage premiums and restore affordability to coverage. Merely providing subsidies that increase as premiums increase will not address affordability. More must be done to introduce true competition among health plans, preserve the role of private market coverage outside of newly created public programs, and address the number of excessive mandates compounding the cost of coverage. Toward that end, AWB will propose and support legislation that does the following:

Solution:

Introduce True Competition Between Health Plans

1. Increase the number of health insurers and health plan types purchasers have access to by allowing the purchase of health care coverage across state lines
2. Reduce regulatory and other identified barriers that either preclude a new insurer from providing coverage in Washington or preclude the sale of such coverage in Washington

Protect the Private Market

1. Affirm the important role of an active and viable private market for individuals and employers outside of the exchange
2. Prohibit the state-based exchange from adopting policies that provide the plans and carriers within the exchange a competitive advantage over those plans and carriers outside of the exchange (with the exception of federal subsidies used to support plans within the exchange)
3. Encourage development of varied health benefit policies to better provide consumer choice
4. Prohibit the elimination of health plan types such as association health plans
5. Prohibit regulatory restrictions or excessive regulation of health plans outside of the exchange
6. Prohibit excessive regulation of health insurers choosing to provide coverage only to those in the private market
7. Prohibit the exchange from providing incentives, aside from subsidies, that are not also available in the private market that encourage individuals or employers to drop private coverage and move to the exchange
8. Maintain a level playing field by prohibiting different licensing standards for sellers of policies just because they are not providing policies in the exchange
9. Require information on total costs expended by state government on the exchange, including costs incurred at each state agency providing staff and services that either support exchange operations, or impose costs on programs offered through the exchange

Reduce Mandates

1. Eliminate state benefit mandates not included in the essential benefit requirements as stipulated by either federal law or federal rule
2. Require an actuarial review of all proposed mandates that evaluates whether implementation of the mandate improves health care outcomes throughout the system