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Commissioner and Governor Urge Yes Vote on Market Stability

Legislature Considering Amendment That Would Position State to Respond to Federal Changes

CONCORD, NH – Insurance Commissioner Roger Sevigny and Governor Chris Sununu urge New Hampshire legislators to vote for an amendment being heard May 23 that would ensure the state has the ability to take any steps that may be needed to stabilize the individual health insurance market in New Hampshire.

“As Congress considers reform of the Affordable Care Act, there is significant uncertainty in the state about the rules of the road for 2018 and beyond,” said New Hampshire Insurance Commissioner Roger Sevigny. “While our individual market has been relatively healthy compared to other states, I am very concerned that uncertainty, combined with the growth of medical and pharmaceutical costs, will affect the availability and cost of health insurance in New Hampshire. I ask the Legislature to act now to help New Hampshire consumers and businesses access affordable coverage.”

The amendment, to House Bill 469, would authorize the New Hampshire Insurance Commissioner, operating under legislative oversight and with the cooperation of Governor Chris Sununu, to seek a federal waiver that would support the availability and affordability of health insurance in the state. A waiver would give New Hampshire the ability to avoid conflicts between state-specific initiatives and federal laws that are designed for all markets across the country. The types of waivers available could vary depending on Congressional action, but having authority to seek a waiver puts New Hampshire in a position of being able to determine its own, state-specific approach, once the final direction of federal law becomes clear.

“At this point, the evidence is overwhelming that Obamacare in several critical areas is not working, and the Americans who rely on it deserve better,” said Governor Sununu. “Failure to reform the ACA is not an option, and Washington needs to end the partisan squabbles and deliver bipartisan solutions. New Hampshire faces the threat that we are staring down the cannon of potentially astronomical rate increases, and state leaders cannot stand idly by while Granite Staters face the possibility of getting hammered with those costs. As such, we will be aggressive in exploring potential alternative options for our citizens to access high-quality plans at prices they can afford. I strongly support passage of this amendment, which would give New Hampshire the ability to develop solutions unique to our state.”

The amendment also would authorize the Insurance Department and the [New Hampshire Health Plan](#), the agency that formerly operated the state’s high-risk pool, to investigate options for assisting the individual market, with or without a waiver. Possibilities include a high-risk pool insurance program for people with pre-existing conditions, or a reinsurance mechanism that will make it easier for insurance companies to provide coverage to high-cost individuals. Both options have the potential to improve market stability after changes to the Affordable Care Act and create a good environment for competition among insurance companies in the state.

The Department has not yet received proposed 2018 rates from the four insurance companies participating in the state's health insurance marketplace next year, but it is aware that in 2016, each company operated at a loss, which could mean that significant rate increases are likely for 2018.

"I have concerns about the future of our individual health insurance market: Public financial statements indicate that each company offering coverage in New Hampshire's federally-facilitated health insurance marketplace lost money in 2016," Commissioner Seigny said. "The individual market covers more than 100,000 people in the state, and it's critical that we explore all options available to us. The Legislature must approve the amendment to House Bill 469 in order to give the state the authority to do so."

About the New Hampshire Insurance Department

The New Hampshire Insurance Department's mission is to promote and protect the public good by ensuring the existence of a safe and competitive insurance marketplace through the development and enforcement of the insurance laws of the State of New Hampshire. For more information, visit www.nh.gov/insurance.