Increasing health care options through ONECare MN buy-in

Issues:

- Too few Minnesotans have affordable health coverage options. Too many Minnesotans have been priced out of coverage because of rising premiums, high deductibles and considerable out-of-pocket expenses. More than half the people who lose insurance coverage do so because they can’t afford to keep it or buy new coverage, according to the 2017 Minnesota Health Access Survey. Instability in the health care market compounds these problems, resulting in fewer people getting coverage.

- Minnesotans also lack comprehensive health coverage options. The individual market offers very few comprehensive health plan options. Shrinking provider networks mean people have less access to in-network, lower-cost health care professionals.

- Too many Minnesotans are uninsured. From 2015 to 2017, the uninsured rate rose from 4.3 percent to 6.3 percent, one of the largest one-time increases ever. About 349,000 Minnesotans have no health coverage. Greater Minnesota is especially hard hit, including parts of northwest and west central Minnesota where more than 10 percent of the population has no health insurance.

Proposal:

- Governor Tim Walz proposes creating comprehensive coverage in the individual market by offering a platinum-level buy-in product. Starting in 2023, this option will offer a provider network and benefit set similar to MinnesotaCare, including dental and vision benefits and behavioral health services. The buy-in option will cover 90 percent of the consumer’s costs. Premiums will cover administrative and medical costs. Payments to providers will be no lower than Medicare rates.

- The governor also proposes increasing health care coverage in regions where the market fails to offer affordable or comprehensive options. Starting in 2024, the state will offer buy-in products in regions where the Minnesota Department of Health identifies market failures. In these regions, the Department of Human Services will offer two products, equivalent to gold-level and silver-level plans, for five years.

Benefits:

- Provides a more comprehensive option to 349,000 uninsured Minnesotans, who may be just one injury or illness away from bankruptcy.

- Ensures that Minnesotans have choices when purchasing health coverage, no matter where they live.

- Improves continuity of coverage for family members, with similar provider networks and benefits for Medical Assistance (Minnesota’s Medicaid program), MinnesotaCare and buy-in coverage options.
• Leaves room in the private market for insurance carriers. The state’s platinum-level product will be a level that insurance carriers have not offered. The state’s silver- and gold-level buy-in products will be offered only in regions where the market fails.
• Expands access to health care with a broad network across the state. Minnesotans will have real options to choose providers and stay with providers they prefer.
• Ensures more consistent payment for providers, without having to collect high deductibles and co-payments from consumers or take on bad debt.

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