



Minnesota Legislature

NEWS RELEASE

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Rep. Atkins, Sen. Lourey Introduce Health Insurance Exchange Legislation

St. Paul, Minnesota — Today, State Representative Joe Atkins (DFL – Inver Grove Heights) and State Senator Tony Lourey (DFL – Kerrick) unveiled bipartisan legislation to establish a health insurance exchange. The exchange will be an online marketplace where Minnesotans can compare and purchase health insurance coverage. Health insurance exchanges are a key component of the Affordable Care Act.

“The health insurance exchange is projected to serve one out of every five Minnesotans — that’s more than 1.2 million Minnesotans,” said Rep. Atkins. “This is a Minnesota-made online marketplace where individuals, families and small businesses will be able to get quality, affordable health coverage that fits their budget.”

Minnesota families are projected to save over \$1 billion by using the exchange to purchase insurance — with the average family saving \$500 and a lower-income family saving approximately \$1,800.

"Minnesota has a unique and historic opportunity to lead the country in health reform, and help roughly 300,000 uninsured Minnesotans gain coverage by 2016," said Sen. Lourey. "A Minnesota-based exchange allows Minnesota the opportunity to modernize our public systems. With this exchange, we can ensure that Minnesota moves forward in providing individuals with access to affordable, quality health care."

Nearly 200,000 small businesses employees are also expected to access coverage through the exchange. Small businesses currently pay on average 18 percent more than large businesses, an average of \$11,000 per year for a family coverage. Small employers are projected to save up to 7.5 percent off of premium costs in the exchange and those eligible for tax credits will save even more. Small business owners would be able to

choose the plan for their workers, or let their employees choose the plan that's right for them.

“Not only will the exchange improve our health care system for families and individuals, it will help our small businesses create jobs as well,” said Rep. Atkins. “Every dollar a small business saves on health care costs is a dollar that can be spent hiring new workers and growing the business.”

“The exchange provides Minnesota with a foundation for real improvements in our health care system,” added Sen. Lourey. “It moves us one step closer to the ‘Triple Aim’ goals of improving the individual's health care experiences and outcomes, improving population health, and lowering health care costs. It puts us in the unique position of being able to accomplish meaningful reforms to help Minnesota families, businesses and our economy.”

The legislation is co-authored by two leading House Republicans: Rep. Greg Davids (R – Preston), the GOP Lead on the House Tax Committee, and Rep. Jim Abeler (R – Anoka), GOP Lead on the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee.

“I'm pleased to be joined by these Republican co-authors,” said Rep. Atkins. “This is a tough, complex issue, there's no doubt about it, but that doesn't mean it has to be a partisan one. We can work together to create this exchange and it will be better for the people of Minnesota if we do.”

The bill funds operation of the exchange by charging health insurance companies a 3.5 percent surcharge on premiums of the health plans purchased through the exchange.

Enrollment in the Minnesota Health Insurance Exchange begins October 1, 2013, with plan coverage starting January 1, 2014. Minnesota's Blueprint Certification Application, submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on November 16, 2012, stated that the legislature would make policy decisions by March 31, 2012. If states are unable to set up an exchange, the federal government will step in and establish it for them.

The legislature is expected to take quick action on an exchange with committee hearings planned for next week. The text of the bill can be found [here](#).