

NEWS RELEASE

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 13, 2012

Governor Affirms Commitment to a State-based Health Insurance Exchange

Hawai'i Becomes First State to Make Health Declaration

HONOLULU - Governor Neil Abercrombie has issued a "declaration letter" to the U.S. Health and Human Services Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) verifying that the Hawai'i is establishing a state-certified health insurance exchange, the Hawai'i Health Connector.

In a June 7, 2012 letter to Steve Larsen, director of the CCIIO, Governor Abercrombie wrote, "Hawai'i is actively pursuing the establishment of a State-Based Exchange through the Connector."

The establishment of the Connector meets the provisions of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. The letter ensures Hawai'i's exchange will be locally controlled rather than federally operated.

For Hawai'i, the Connector is a next step toward a healthy community supported by health care benefits. In 1974, the State was an early adopter of expanded health care benefits when it passed the Pre-Paid Health Care Act, which brought employer-provided insurance coverage to a majority of workers. In late May 2012, CCIIO issued a call for states to declare their intentions for the exchanges and how they will be structured.

Hawai'i is the first state in the nation to declare its intent to develop a State-Based Insurance Exchange. By January 1, 2014 Hawai'i will have a marketplace that will provide a level playing field for individuals and small businesses to access affordable health insurance.

Governor Abercrombie said, "Hawai'i has been a long-time leader in health care coverage and pledging our commitment to moving forward with our exchange, the Health Connector, reaffirms our commitment to providing healthcare to everyone."

"Hawai'i has already received two grants from the federal government to assist with planning and set up of the Connector," stated State Healthcare Transformation Coordinator Beth Giesting. "The Hawai'i Health Connector, a nonprofit partner with the state, will be crucial in moving Hawai'i toward universal coverage, providing consumers clear, understandable information, and ensuring that all choices offer high quality care."

Hawaii's Connector, established by Hawaii Act 205 in 2011, is a private, non-profit corporation and is recognized as a quasi-governmental agency. The Connector, overseen by a board of directors representing a diversity of interests and expertise, already has adopted articles of incorporation and bylaws and is well on its way to setting up the exchange.

Some states are opting for federal facilitation and control of their exchanges.

"We're very focused on establishing the exchange as State-Based, ensuring that the Connector is of Hawaii and for Hawaii," said Coral Andrews, executive director of the Connector.

Its web portal will serve as a one-stop-shop where individuals and small business can find, compare and purchase the best, most economical health insurance plans available to them. The Medicaid eligibility system will be integrated into the exchange.

"Hawaii looks forward to working collaboratively with CMS in order to ultimately obtain approval for State-Based Exchange and to ensure the Connector's operational readiness for 2014," stated Governor Abercrombie.

###

For more information contact: Donalyn Dela Cruz, Deputy Director of Communications, (808) 586-0012
<http://hawaii.gov/gov>