

*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*



*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

MISSOURI SENATE JEFFERSON CITY

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Senate Votes for Plan to Help Working Families to Afford Health Insurance

Show-Me Health Coverage Plan for Thousands of Uninsured

JEFFERSON CITY – Missouri families earning low incomes are a step closer to available, affordable healthcare with the Missouri Senate's vote to advance a program called Show-Me Health Coverage created in Senate Bill 306. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Tom Dempsey, R-St. Charles, would first cover 35,000 Missourians and ultimately provide private health insurance to up to 200,000 of Missouri's 700,000 uninsured. The measure would pay the premiums for health insurance for individuals who earn up to 50 percent the federal poverty level, or \$9,156 for a parent and two children. Custodial parents with an income of up to 100% of the federal poverty level will also be eligible for the program through an amendment to the state's MO HealthNet program.

"Everyone deserves to be healthy," Dempsey said. "That's why we want to make health insurance more affordable and portable to low-income families so they can use preventive services and stay healthy, rather than go to the costly emergency room as a last resort after they are sick." The plan would be housed within the Department of Social Services and provide health care coverage through the private insurance market to low-income Missourians. Coverage for the first 35,000 participants would be funded by a new federal drawdown on existing tax dollar that currently go to pay hospitals for the care of the uninsured. It is anticipated to assist thousands of working mothers.

Dempsey also said the plan creates a health care home. Plus, participants with an income above the federal poverty level can participate. They will have a health care account and payments into the account would be made by the participant. Employers, the state, or any charitable organizations can also make payments into the participant's individual health care account. Money in the participant's health care account would be used to pay deductibles for health care services they receive under the plan.

It also sets guidelines to make Mo HealthNet claims data public. Dempsey said making the costs of the taxpayer funded MO HealthNet program transparent will make sure tax dollars are used efficiently by indentifying and rooting out any waste, fraud or abuse.

Senate Leader Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, says the consumer-driven approach is best for participants.

"I believe people, not bureaucrats in Jefferson City, know what is best for their health. That is why we want to put patients back in the driver's seat when it comes to making healthcare decisions for their families," he said. "With Show-Me Health Coverage, we can drastically reduce the number of uninsured Missourians giving them ownership and choices in the healthcare decisions they make for their families."

The plan is subject to appropriation and must also be approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The bill now moves to the House for similar consideration. To track the bill, visit www.senate.mo.gov - "keyword" search for SB306.

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