

*Welch, Murphy, Braley legislation aims to reduce healthcare costs and encourage competition*

As lawmakers begin to debate health care reform, Rep. Peter Welch has introduced legislation that would create a public health insurance option as a key component of comprehensive national health care reform.

Welch, along with Reps. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and Bruce Braley (D-Iowa), introduced H.R. 2668, the Choice in Health Options Insures Care for Everyone (CHOICE) Act.

The bill creates a public health insurance plan that would compete on a level playing field with private insurers. Consumers would choose between the public plan and private plans as part of a national health insurance marketplace. The bill would help drive down health costs by facilitating competition between health plans. The public plan would be funded by premiums - not taxpayer dollars.

"Throughout the country, Americans are struggling to find and afford health care coverage. The time to reform the health care system is now," Welch said. "This is a practical bill that gives consumers a choice in selecting quality and affordable health care coverage."

Welch, Murphy and Braley all serve on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, which has jurisdiction over health reform legislation. A draft comprehensive health care reform bill is expected to be unveiled by the committee next week.

At a South Burlington news conference last month, Welch unveiled two other health care bills intended to increase the quality of care while reducing costs. His Blueprint for Health Act of 2009 encourages primary care providers to operate their practices as patient-centered medical homes charged with preventing and managing chronic conditions. His Reward Value, Not Volume Act of 2009 would reform health payment systems to incentivize quality and efficiency of care, rather than the volume and intensity of services.