

Vermont will receive more than \$18 million to help the state implement a new national health care reform law, the state's congressional delegation announced today.

The federal funds will help the state devise an insurance exchange to make it simpler for consumers to select affordable health insurance policies.

Under the national health care law, insurance exchanges must be established in every state to provide consumers more affordable choices for health insurance coverage beginning in 2014.

Vermont plans to structure its exchange to be converted by 2017 to a public, single-payer health care model that would provide better care at less cost.

The insurance exchange nevertheless would be a first step for state residents to receive federal tax credits and premium subsidies for meaningful health insurance under the federal law. Moreover, the systems established to manage an insurance exchange eventually could be used to help administer a single-payer system.

The state Legislature and Gov. Peter Shumlin earlier this year created a board to design and implement a publicly-funded health care system for the state.

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said, "Vermont again has proven itself a national leader on health insurance policy and practice. These funds will allow our state to develop a health insurance marketplace that in the short term will help Vermonters choose affordable health insurance, and that in the long term will be a stepping stone to the state's goal of universal health coverage. Today's difficult economy means fewer Americans have access to health insurance or have the ability to pay for health care. This award will help Vermont move closer to the goal of insurance access for every Vermonter and to address the problem of rising health costs."

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), a member of the Senate health committee, hoped Vermont will be allowed as soon as possible to implement a single-payer system. "At a time when 50 million

Americans lack health insurance and when the cost of health care continues to soar, it is my strong hope that Vermont will lead the nation in a new direction through a Medicare-for-all, single-payer approach to health care," Sanders said. "Today's announcement will help Vermont begin to build the foundation for truly universal, cost-effective and high quality health care for every man, woman and child in Vermont in the years to come."

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) said, "Vermont has a long history of leading the nation in health care reform, providing a model for the rest of the country. This investment will keep Vermont at the forefront of reform and help provide cost-effective, quality health insurance to all Vermonters."

Vermont was one of 13 states to share \$220 million awarded today by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to design Affordable Insurance Exchanges – one-stop marketplaces where consumers can choose a private health insurance plan that fits their health needs. Altogether, 49 states and the District of Columbia have received planning grants.