



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

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GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 13, 2008

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Governor Rell Blasts Legislative Panel's Vote to Delay Charter Oak Health Plan: Promises Veto

Committee Turns Its Back on Thousands of Uninsured Residents

Condemning members of the legislature's Human Services committee for seeking to halt progress on bringing affordable health coverage to uninsured adults, Governor M. Jodi Rell today urged the General Assembly to reaffirm its 2007 decision to begin the Charter Oak Health Plan this July.

"Today, majority members of the Human Services Committee took a giant step backward," Governor Rell said. "The Committee voted to approve a deeply flawed bill, thereby turning its back on our uninsured residents. The committee's approval of Substitute Bill No. 5618 attempts to delay the Charter Oak Health Plan for at least six months and reverse the legislature's approval last year for a July 2008 implementation date for Charter Oak.

"Thousands of our residents continue to live without decent health care coverage and for months many have been phoning and e-mailing their support of Charter Oak. Unfortunately, their pleas have fallen on deaf ears with the Democrats on the Human Services Committee.

"Many of those who voted for this bill are playing into the hands of advocates who are trying to kill the Charter Oak plan because they want universal health care -- estimated last year to cost in excess of \$17 billion, which is about the cost of the entire state budget for FY 2008," the Governor noted. "Connecticut taxpayers cannot afford that pipedream -- but our un-insured and under-insured residents can afford Charter Oak and they desperately want the coverage it will provide."

The Governor noted that about 94 percent of all Connecticut residents do have health care and that Charter Oak is a plan specifically targeted to those who have no health care coverage.

"By voting to delay implementation of Charter Oak, the committee would also delaying health care coverage to our residents," Governor Rell said. "For people who must struggle to pay for health services out of pocket -- or who can not afford to seek medical care due to cost -- six months is an awfully long time. I wonder if the committee members understand how desperately

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needed this program is. Sometimes, in the debate of policies and programs, people seem to forget that there are real people with real needs that are not being addressed.”

Governor Rell said the potential delay of Charter Oak would be a byproduct of Substitute Bill No. 5618’s disrupting of an ongoing state procurement process – the combined purchase of health coverage through the new Charter Oak Health Plan and the existing HUSKY Plan. The state issued its combined RFP in January and expects bids from insurers to be submitted by March 28 (technical proposals) and April 11 (cost proposals).

Following the request for proposals, the Department of Social Services received letters of intent from:

- AmeriHealth Mercy Health Plan, Philadelphia, Pa.;
- Anthem Health Plans Inc. (Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield), North Haven;
- Community Health Network of Connecticut, Wallingford;
- Delta Dental of New Jersey, Parsippany, N.J.
- Schaller Anderson Health Plans, LLC, (an Aetna company), Phoenix, Ariz.; and
- AmeriChoice (a United Health Group company), Vienna, Va.

If the bill to separate procurement of HUSKY and Charter Oak services moves forward through the legislature, the state would have to go back to square one to issue separate requests for proposals. Insurers already working on their complex bid proposals would have to begin again.

“The Human Services Committee is taking its eye off the ball, meaning that the majority is fine with delays, delays, delays,” Governor Rell said. “I am hopeful other legislative committees will not repeat this error and let our uninsured adults down. However, if this bill reaches my desk, I will veto it.”

Governor Rell praised Republican committee members and Democratic Representative Christel H. Truglia of Stamford for voting against the bill.

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