

Rep. Allen: Votes to help offset Obamacare disaster

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Rep. Scott Allen voted yesterday to approve several bills designed to lower health care costs for consumers and promote better patient outcomes.

The Wisconsin Healthcare Stability Plan (WHSP) is a reinsurance program proposed at the request of Governor Walker. The reinsurance program uses market-based approaches to minimize the harm to thousands of Wisconsinites who are seeing insurance rates skyrocket under the Affordable Care Act. Obamacare premium rate increases are projected to hit 15% in 2019. Reinsurance is estimated to push that rate down to just 2% in 2019, and in 2020, the program is expected to lower premiums by 2%. Smart utilization of federal dollars under the waiver will result in a net cost to the state of just \$50 million.

“We care deeply for our friends and neighbors who are being hit hard by Obamacare premium increases,” said Rep. Allen. “No state law can completely undo the ongoing damage from Obamacare, but this innovative waiver will help stabilize the market in Wisconsin.”

The Assembly also passed a direct primary care program for Medical Assistance recipients. Under direct primary care, a health care provider can offer an unlimited amount of specific services for a monthly fee. The program is not insurance, and as such is exempt from state insurance law. Fees are lower than typical insurance because health care providers can avoid administrative costs relating to filing insurance claims. Thus far, 23 other states offer direct primary care. Due to the

flexibility of direct primary care, families could have access to a doctor 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In another piece of legislation aimed at lowering consumer costs, small businesses would be able to group together to self-fund health care insurance for employees. Businesses are already permitted to self-insure, but the funding is often so large that only large corporations are able to utilize this tool. Pooling resources within the same chamber of commerce or trade organization would allow small businesses to participate in an economy of scale. Employer groups would still be required to have their programs approved by the Commissioner of Insurance.

“Direct primary care for Medical Assistance and self-funded health insurance for small businesses are common-sense approaches to lowering health care costs,” said Rep. Allen. “We want better outcomes for patients and lower health care costs for small businesses.”

The Assembly also passed legislation in the continuation of the HOPE (Heroin, Opiate, Prevention, and Education) Agenda. The two bills are aimed at giving local law enforcement agencies grants to assist in prosecuting drug-related offenses and funding for family treatment courts.

The legislation, AB 906, provides \$1 million per biennium in grants to law enforcement agencies to combat drug trafficking. It also provides funding for drug prosecutors in northern Wisconsin, while also funding programs which can deter young offenders from correctional facilities.

The Assembly also approved legislation to provide funding and changes to standards to increase the availability of psychiatric nurses and training for social service workers. The bill, AB 907, requires that the Department of Children and Families develop and maintain online training materials to help social service workers and veterans service workers responding to substance abuse cases. The bill also provides funding for the UW-School of Nursing to expand the graduate Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses program, a specialty within the field of nursing.