

Rodriguez calls for public health insurance option

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Dem gubernatorial candidate Sara Rodriguez today called for a Wisconsin public health insurance option that she said would use the state's purchasing power to provide enrollees lower costs for prescription drugs, mental health services and other care.

The lieutenant governor also called for a "Health Care Bill of Rights," codifying the right to an abortion, extending postpartum coverage under Medicaid to a year and creating a fund to help keep rural health care providers open.

"When people have affordable, reliable health care, everything else gets easier," Rodriguez said.

The lieutenant governor, a former nurse and health care executive, didn't have a price tag for her proposal, saying it would require an actuarial analysis that would include how many people are no longer covered by the Affordable Care Act exchanges.

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Colorado and Washington state offer similar public options—government-run plans that compete with private insurers. Colorado's public option is available to those who buy their coverage on the individual market and small employers with less than 50 employees. Health insurance plans are required to lower premiums under the plans, according to the program's [website](#). Premium increases under the Washington state plan were nearly 50% lower than other options in 2024, according to its [website](#).

Rodriguez said the bill of rights she wants enshrined in state law would provide protections to those with pre-existing conditions, including bans on denying them

coverage, charging them more or kicking them off their plan. It also would ban lifetime and annual coverage limits and surprise billing.

During her Madison news conference, Rodriguez took several shots at GOP gubernatorial candidate and U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, of Minocqua, for the expiration of federal tax credits to lower the cost of purchasing individual coverage through the Affordable Care Act exchange.

Tiffany in a statement fired back that Rodriguez has no record of making life more affordable for Wisconsinites.

“She continues to push bailouts for wealthy health insurance companies with your tax dollars, all while her subsidized plan would mean higher taxes and higher premiums for nearly all Wisconsinites,” he said.

Rodriguez also defended Gov. Tony Evers’ record on addressing health care considering he’s had a GOP-controlled Legislature for all seven years he’s been in office.

“He has done as much as he can with a hostile Legislature,” she said.