



## News Release

**For Immediate Release**

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### **“Healthier Choices” Plan Will Cut Costs, Improve Health Care Options Groups Unveil Major Health Care Reform Plan**

**MADISON** – Three major groups Wednesday unveiled a comprehensive health care reform plan -- “Wisconsin’s Healthier Choices for Affordable Health Care” -- aimed at lowering health care costs and providing benefit flexibility to employers and employees.

“This plan ensures that more people in Wisconsin will have better care at a lower price without a government takeover of the health care system,” said Steve Brenton, president of Wisconsin Hospital Association. “‘Healthier Choices’ will make sure more Wisconsin residents get the care they need at a price they can afford.”

Brenton, along with representatives of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, and Wisconsin Association of Health Plans unveiled the six-point plan to curb double-digit health care inflation, while offering workers increased health care flexibility and promoting better health care choices for Wisconsin. The groups predict bi-partisan support for the plan, which will require changes in state law. Other parts of the plan require voluntary industry initiatives.

Benefit flexibility is a key to controlling costs, said James S. Haney, president of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce. Current law requires numerous mandated health care benefits that mostly small employers must offer employees, even if they don’t need the coverage. Self-funded health care plans, offered by mostly large companies, are exempt from mandates.

“Clearly, if we give small employers the freedom to innovate with health care packages, more Wisconsin employers could offer health care at lower costs,” Haney said. “State-mandated benefits force employers into an ‘all-or-nothing’ position, forcing them to offer employees benefit packages they may not need. That drives up costs.”

Nancy Wenzel, executive director of the Wisconsin Association of Health Plans, said insurers, employers and health care providers are optimistic that the “Healthier Choices” plan will draw strong bi-partisan support.

“This is a comprehensive plan developed by health care providers, purchasers and payers from around the state,” Wenzel said. “Wisconsin needs to help employers get health care costs under control, and this plan provides the road map.”

**(MORE)**

Wisconsin's Healthier Choices for Affordable Care  
SUMMARY  
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- **ENABLE AFFORDABLE COVERAGE** – Increase the number of Wisconsin employers able to afford health care coverage by giving insurers flexibility in designing health insurance benefits that better meet employers' needs.
- **PROMOTE QUALITY** – Encourage the continued development of a consumer-driven health care environment in Wisconsin. Promising collaborative efforts to collect and report information related to quality, safety and cost should continue among providers and health plans. The state should provide assistance to promote information sharing, to help employers and consumers understand publicly reported data and to encourage innovative quality and safety improvement efforts in the marketplace.
- **REPEAL THE HIDDEN TAX** – Cut the “hidden tax” on purchasers of private health insurance by reforming the Health Insurance Risk Sharing Plan (HIRSP) and the Medicaid/BadgerCare Program and providing adequate government funding to cover the cost of providing care.
- **GROW HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE** – Increase the supply of health care professionals in Wisconsin by restoring funding for Graduate Medical Education and make it easier for the UWS and the WTCS to streamline the process of graduating qualified health care professionals. Direct the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to issue an annual health care workforce report and make recommendations for improvement.
- **CUT RED TAPE, CONTROL COSTS** – Eliminate unnecessary and duplicative government regulation to reduce costs and give purchasers, providers and payers greater flexibility in creating solutions to the problems identified in health care today.
- **PROMOTE HEALTHIER CHOICES** – Strengthen the role of consumers in the health care system today by providing information on health care quality and cost, promoting the use of advance directives, and encouraging better lifestyle choices that improve health status.

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