

## Governor Christie Outlines Path Forward to Best Maintain New Jersey's Delivery of Excellent Healthcare to Residents

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**Trenton, NJ** - Continuing with his commitment to comply with the mandates of the Affordable Care Act in a manner that protects the best interests of New Jersey and New Jerseyans, Governor Christie today gave formal notice to the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that New Jersey is opting to put in place a federally administered Exchange for Plan Year 2014, because it is the most responsible choice for the state. In a letter to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, the Governor affirmed his Administration's commitment to protecting high quality healthcare for New Jerseyans, cooperating with the federal government as an exchange comes online in New Jersey, and detailed the many steps taken to improve the excellence in care for all of our state's residents.

"My Administration is committed to meeting our obligation to comply with the Affordable Care Act, but only in a manner that is the most effective and efficient for the residents of New Jersey, and the businesses that will carry the costs of this new program. New Jersey enjoys a respected and earned reputation as a national leader in treatment and coverage, and our residents rightfully expect excellence in healthcare," said Governor Christie. "In order to move forward in a manner that best meets that standard for our families and businesses, and that ensures that all New Jerseyans have access to the best healthcare options supported by the most effective insurance coverage, I have determined that federal operation of the Exchange is the responsible choice for our state."

Under the Christie Administration, New Jersey has already taken numerous significant steps to comply with the federal mandates under the Affordable Care Act, while also instituting numerous reforms and initiatives to improve the quality of and access to care for all New Jerseyans.

In December of 2012, New Jersey selected an Essential Health Benefits Benchmark plan, as required under the Affordable Care Act.

New Jersey has successfully implemented NJ Protect, a federally subsidized health insurance program for individuals with pre-existing health conditions. NJ Protect enrolled its first policyholders in August of 2010 and now serves 1,400 New Jerseyans with serious illnesses such as cancer and heart disease by providing them access to affordable insurance and care.

New Jersey is in the final stages of modernizing our Medicaid and social service eligibility information systems, which will work with the federal exchange, through the Consolidated Assistance Support System (CASS). CASS will allow one-stop shopping - easier access, holistic benefit delivery, and unified casework - for New Jerseyans who qualify for the state's most-used social service programs.

In 2011, New Jersey was certified as operating an "Effective Rate Review Program" in all insurance markets. The certification meets a requirement of the Affordable Care Act and confirms that consumers are paying reasonable rates.

The State of New Jersey worked with the Obama Administration to protect access to the state's most affordable insurance coverage, "Basic and Essential" coverage utilized by approximately two-thirds of the 145,000 New Jerseyans covered by individual insurance in New Jersey, a coverage option under threat due to the provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

In October of 2012, New Jersey secured approval of our Comprehensive Medicaid Waiver in order to preserve New Jersey's Medicaid program for the most vulnerable. The waiver allows the Christie Administration to move forward with bold, innovative reforms to decrease the cost of care, improve quality and delivery through integrated, managed care, and offer premium payment assistance for needy families. This is being accomplished without affecting eligibility, imposing co-pays, or cutting optional services.

Previously, Governor Christie declined to establish a state run exchange citing the many critical, open policy questions before states - even as federally imposed deadlines loomed to make far-reaching and significant decisions with respect to implementation of provision of the Affordable Care Act. The absence of clarity denied states the requisite information needed to make informed decisions for their residents. Those concerns were detailed in Governor Christie's veto message of S-2135.

A PDF copy of Governor Christie's letter to Secretary Sebelius [pdf 435kB] can be found as an attachment to this release.

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