



OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SENATE PRESIDENT PETER COURTNEY

HOUSE SPEAKER TINA KOTEK

NEWS RELEASE

December 13, 2013

Contact:

Robin Maxey
503-986-1605

Robin.maxey@state.or.us

Jared Mason-Gere
503-986-1204

jared.masongere@state.or.us

COURTNEY, KOTEK URGE EXTENSION OF HEALTH COVERAGE FOR OREGONIANS IN HIGH-RISK INSURANCE POOL

(SALEM) – Senate President Peter Courtney and Speaker of the House Tina Kotek urged the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to take action to extend health insurance coverage for Oregonians who have been enrolled in the state’s high risk insurance pool.

The Legislative leaders said the Legislature will likely need to act early in 2014 to complete the transactions necessary to fund the extension. They said they are exploring what legislation may be necessary in the 2014 session to support immediate action by the agency.

“We cannot leave the most vulnerable Oregonians out in the cold,” said Courtney (D-Salem/Gervais/Woodburn). “We need the agency to act now. I want these vulnerable Oregonians to know that the Legislature has their back on this.”

The Oregon Medical Insurance Pool (OMIP) was created to offer health insurance to Oregonians who were denied coverage by private insurance companies due to pre-existing medical conditions. It currently serves approximately 10,500 people in Oregon.

With the full implementation of the federal Affordable Care Act next year, insurance plans will no longer be allowed to deny coverage to those individuals. Accordingly, the OMIP program is scheduled to expire December 31, 2013.

To continue to have health insurance, OMIP members will need to enroll in new plans on the open market or through Cover Oregon, the state's healthcare insurance marketplace. However, problems with the Cover Oregon website and delays in processing paper applications for insurance threaten to leave some OMIP members without coverage beginning January 1.

"We can't allow insurance coverage for these people to lapse simply because of problems with a website," said Kotek. "We have the ability to make certain they can access health care until they can get enrolled in new insurance plans. It's the right thing to do."

Courtney and Kotek said OHA has the ability to create temporary relief for OMIP enrollees on its own but will likely need legislation to reconcile the transfer of funds necessary to pay for the extension.

The 2014 Session is scheduled to begin February 3.

###