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Staff Report

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Otter helps pitch health care plan to feds

Governor met with officials after issuing order to allow some insurers to drop Affordable Care Act requirements

Associated Press

BOISE - Idaho officials have pitched the state's health care proposal to federal officials, making a case to allow insurers to sell plans that don't comply with the federal health care law.

Idaho Gov. C. L. "Butch" Otter and state Department of Insurance Director Dean Cameron met with top federal health care officials last week after the Republican governor issued an executive order last month to allow some state health insurance plans to drop certain requirements, the Idaho Statesman reported.

Under the Affordable Care Act, Cameron said prices for insurance plans have soared, leading people to drop their coverage.

"People want to act like if we do nothing, everything is going to be OK; that's not the case," Cameron said. "People with health conditions who wouldn't normally drop coverage will be forced to drop coverage."

Cameron said the state plan aims to bring healthier customers back into the system and strengthen the state's health insurance market. These goals were outlined during the meeting, which included Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma.

"I think Secretary Azar was sympathetic to the problems we are facing," Cameron said. "We talked about how the market is bifurcated, and that the existing market was headed for collapse unless we were able to find some way to attract the young and healthy back into the marketplace."

The state's approach seeks plans with lower premiums by allowing insurers to use a person's health status to determine how much they pay and to deny coverage for pre-existing conditions in some cases. It also seeks to set annual limits on coverage.

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