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Mississippians Deserve More Affordable Health Insurance Options

By Mississippi Insurance Commissioner Mike Chaney

Over the past year, more than 200,000 Mississippians have left the Affordable Care Act marketplace as the cost of coverage has increased due to the expiration of the Enhanced Premium Tax Credits at the end of 2025. At the same time, insurers are requesting significant rate increases or leaving the market. Families who are already struggling are having to ask, "What can I afford?"

As insurance commissioner, my responsibility is to protect Mississippi consumers and help ensure they have access to insurance products that meet their needs. That means we need to look at every responsible option available to us. One option that deserves serious consideration is expanding access to short-term health insurance plans.

Short-term plans are not a replacement for comprehensive health insurance, and they are not the right choice for everyone. These plans may not be a good option for those with serious health conditions. They generally provide fewer benefits and protections than Affordable Care Act plans, and consumers need to understand those differences before purchasing a policy.

But a lower-cost plan may be a better option than having no insurance at all. Someone who has lost marketplace coverage, is between jobs, is waiting for employer-sponsored coverage to begin or simply cannot afford a traditional marketplace plan should have an opportunity to purchase affordable coverage that can help protect against unexpected medical expenses.

That is why I am exploring the use of the Mississippi Comprehensive Health Insurance Risk Pool Association as a pathway for offering these plans. The Legislature created the risk pool in 1991. I've approached the governing board with a plan about how to move forward. Consumers could have access to short-term plan options later this year or in early 2027.

The goal here is to give Mississippi consumers more choices.

We should not assume that every Mississippian has the same health insurance needs. Some people need comprehensive coverage with broad benefits and protections. Others may need a lower-cost option to bridge a temporary gap in coverage. Consumers should have the ability to make that choice for themselves, provided they have clear information about what they are buying.

Mississippi families are telling us that affordability matters. We need to listen.

We need to recognize that our health insurance market is changing. Federal subsidies that helped make marketplace coverage affordable for many people have expired. Around 200,000 Mississippians opted out of their Marketplace coverage this year. Mississippi dropped from about 335,000 people enrolled in 2025 to around 125,000 who are still making payments as of August. Additionally, insurers are requesting substantial premium increases. Enrollees in the ACA Marketplace can expect to see an average rate increase of around 20% next year, depending on their carrier and plan. And some companies are leaving altogether. Molina Healthcare intends to withdraw from Mississippi's federally run marketplace after this year, while Cigna is leaving Mississippi and every other state's ACA exchange.

Mississippi needs to pursue practical solutions that expand access, encourage competition and give consumers more choices. Short-term health insurance is one piece of that conversation. It is not the entire answer to Mississippi's health care affordability challenges, but it can be an important option for people who need affordable coverage now. My office is seeking approval from the Mississippi Legislature and its leadership so we can apply for 1332 waivers. Federal regulators have asked MID to try to get the waiver to lower high-cost claims and premiums.

Deputy Commissioner David Browning and I will continue looking for ways to put consumers first. That means supporting competition, encouraging innovation, and making sure Mississippians have access to clear, understandable information about their insurance choices.