



## HI makes progress on ACA, but one lawmaker isn't celebrating

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September 19, 2013

HONOLULU — Hawaii is inching closer to implementing the Affordable Care Act on Oct. 1, yet Gov. Neil Abercrombie ultimately wants a universal health-care plan.

The governor on Tuesday announced the launch of the Hawaii Health Connector Exchange, which will funnel people into Obamacare.

“This is a terrific day for Hawaii,” Abercrombie told a packed room of supporters.

Not everyone is celebrating.

Senate Minority Leader Sam Slom voted against the exchange. Of the 76 lawmakers who voted, Slom was the lone dissenter.

“It is not about health; it is all about power and control,” Slom said.

State Insurance Commissioner Gordon Ito said some 95 health plans will be offered through the virtual marketplace.

The feds allocated about \$128 million to fund the connector call center, website, assistance program and general maintenance and operations through December 2014.

The health-care connector is partnering with 34 local organizations on all Hawaiian Islands to help people sign up. As it stands, however, just two providers, HMSA and Kaiser Permanente, are offering plans through the connector.

Patricia McManaman, director of the state Department of Human Services, said the launch of the connector is “transformative” for Hawaii, and even more state and federal dollars should and will be spent to garner federal subsidies for Hawaii’s needy.

Asset tests and proof of income requirements for new recipients and people renewing their applications will be waived to ensure Hawaii's poor aren't burdened with providing the paperwork, McManaman said

Slom said, "As now confirmed by proponents, the ultimate goal is government, single payer health coverage, destruction of the private insurance industry and exemptions for unions, regulated businesses and special interest groups."

Small businesses and the taxpayers will pick up the tremendous tab for this new level of government, Slom said.

"Proponents also brag about the connector being the easy gateway for even greater welfare expansion in Hawaii with no requirement for income, asset or needs limits. This program, a key component of Obamacare, will disconnect individuals from the reality of higher taxes and lower options," Slom said.

Kalbert Young, director of the state Office of Budget & Finance, said Hawaii taxpayers spend \$2.8 billion, or 20 percent of the state's operating budget, on Department of Human Services programs, including welfare, food stamps, housing and health-care subsidies. That's more than the state spends on public education.

The CATO Institute ranked Hawaii as the most generous state in terms of offering welfare benefits.