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Critics Express Concerns about Massachusetts Model

By *Sarah Lovenheim*

As the health-care reform debate heats up in Congress, some lawmakers [point to Massachusetts as a model](#) for a new government-supported health system.

In a 2008 study conducted about a year after Massachusetts passed law to expand health-care coverage statewide, 8 percent of adults [reportedly lacked coverage](#), seven percentage points lower than the national average that year. This year, the Brookings Institution reported that fewer than 3 percent of Massachusetts residents are uninsured.

Critics, however, are urging Congress to look behind the numbers.

Conservative and libertarian groups [held a forum on Capitol Hill yesterday](#), asking Congress to keep in mind that expanding coverage can come with a cost.

Senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute Michael Tanner, for instance, considers the state health system a burden on its budget and taxpayers.

"Since the program became law, total state health care spending has increased by 28 percent. Insurance premiums have been increasing by 10-12 percent per year, nearly double the national average," Tanner said.

His numbers come from a [a recent Cato report](#) that predicts Massachusetts will face significant deficits in the future tied to reform.

The state is considering caps on insurance premiums and cuts in reimbursements to providers as a result, he said.

Greg D'Angelo, a policy analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank, who joined in on the forum, echoed Tanner's concerns. D'Angelo said Congress can consider the outcome of expanded coverage commendable, but suggested lawmakers examine the source of the state's cost burden before taking any tips.

In Massachusetts, "There was enough money there, that wasn't the problem. The implementation [of the 2006 reform law] was wrong" he said.

By Sarah Lovenheim | June 23, 2009; 5:45 AM ET

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