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Summary of the Colorado Health Benefit Exchange

November 2012

The Colorado Health Benefit Exchange is a new health insurance marketplace, scheduled to open for business in October 2013, where individuals, families and small employers can shop for and buy health insurance based on quality and price. Customers will shop primarily through a website and will have access to assistance by phone and in person through a network of customer support professionals. The Exchange will also provide access to financial assistance to eligible Coloradans to reduce the cost of premiums. The marketplace will have a new name prior to opening.

Established by Senate Bill 11-200, the Exchange is a public, non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors with additional direction from a panel of state legislators called the Legislative Implementation Review Committee. The mission of the Exchange is to increase access, affordability, and choice for individuals and small employers purchasing health insurance in Colorado. Customers are expected to begin purchasing health plans through the Exchange in October 2013, with plans taking effect on Jan. 1 2014.

BACKGROUND

The concept of a health insurance exchange is not new. Utah and Massachusetts operate different types of public exchanges. In 2008, the Colorado Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform recommended that the state create a way to help individuals and small businesses access health insurance as part of a larger effort to improve the health care system. Federal law enacted in 2010 calls for states to establish health insurance exchanges. Colorado leaders engaged in a broad discussion with stakeholder groups in 2010 to seek input about whether the state should move forward with an exchange and, if so, how it should be structured. These discussions led to bipartisan legislation, Senate Bill 11-200, that was introduced in the Colorado General Assembly in March 2011 and signed into law in June 2011.

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

SB11-200 outlines the governance structure for the Colorado Health Benefit Exchange. There is an appointed Board of Directors and a bi-partisan Legislative Implementation Review Committee. The Board of Directors consists of nine voting members, five of who are appointed by the Governor with the remaining members appointed by leadership of the General Assembly. The Board meets in open session twice a month and also participates in committees that focus on technology implementation, finances, rules and regulations, personnel and grant applications. Current Board members include:

- Gretchen Hammer (Chair), Denver, Executive Director for the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved.
- Richard T. Betts (Vice Chair), Telluride, Owner, ASAP Accounting & Payroll, Inc.
- Arnold Salazar (Secretary), Alamosa, Executive Director of Co. Health Partnerships, LLC.
- Eric Grossman, Englewood, Vice President at TriZetto.
- Robert S. Ruiz-Moss, Lone Tree, Market Segment Lead of Anthem Blue Cross.
- Elizabeth Soberg, Centennial, Chief Executive Officer of UnitedHealthcare of Colorado.
- Stephen ErkenBrack, Grand Junction, President of Rocky Mountain Health Plan.
- Dr. Michael Fallon, Denver, emergency room physician.
- Nathan Wilkes, Arapahoe County, Founder and Principal consultant, Headstorms, Inc.
- Ken Lund, Executive Director of the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (Ex-officio)
- Susan Birch, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (Ex-officio)
- Jim Riesberg, Commissioner of Insurance (Ex-officio).

The Legislative Implementation Review Committee is appointed by leadership in the House and Senate and is tasked with making recommendations to the General Assembly and protecting the interests of Coloradans. The Review Committee is responsible for approving the hiring of the Exchange's Executive Director, approving grant applications from the Board and approving the Exchange's initial financial and operational plan. The Review Committee may also report up to five bills to the legislative council. The Review Committee members are:

- Representative Bob Gardner (Chair)
- Senator Betty Boyd (Vice Chair)
- Senator Irene Aguilar
- Representative Deb Gardner
- Representative Jim Kerr
- Senator Kevin Lundberg
- Representative Beth McCann
- Senator Jeanne Nicholson
- Senator Ellen Roberts
- Representative Ken Summers

The Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Exchange is Patty Fontneau. Ms. Fontneau is supported by a modest team of staff and consultants. More information about the staff is available [here](#). Initial planning work in 2011 was funded by a federal planning grant. The federal government has approved two grants in 2012 to fund planning activities and the acquisition of technology services. Additional federal grant support will be necessary to launch the Exchange in October 2013. SB11-200 prohibits state general funds from being used for the implementation or operation of the Exchange and requires that the Exchange be self-financing in 2015. The Board and staff face an aggressive schedule with an extensive list of policy decisions and operational milestones that must be achieved in an open and collaborative process with stakeholders. In addition to an active Twitter feed and website that is updated on a regular basis, Ms. Fontneau publishes a weekly blog to inform the community about Exchange activities. The COHBE Board and staff invite public participation as they work with key stakeholders to build an Exchange that fulfills the intent of SB 11-200 and the needs of Colorado.