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**State Senator E.J. Pipkin Unveils “CHOICE” Consumer Health Open
Insurance Coverage**
Similar plan offered to Federal Government Employees

Declaring that, “the state’s structure for delivering health care is not working,” Senator EJ Pipkin (R. Upper Shore 36th) announced he will introduce a three-prong approach to creating a new health care delivery structure, which will be “consumer driven, rather than the currently employer and government driven.”

Pipkin called his plan “CHOICE Consumer Health Open Insurance Coverage.” He emphasized that the plan will “offer a viable alternative to the vetoed Wal-Mart bill, which is a prime example of employer driven coverage, and the various proposals to establish a government-driven universal health care system.”

Currently two insurance carriers control 94% of the small group market, making it static and noncompetitive. Under Pipkin’s proposal all plans offered through CHOICE will be subject to Maryland insurance regulation and will provide major medical coverage, such as hospital, surgical and ambulatory patient benefits, as well as prescription drug benefits. Within the broad benefit categories, insurers will be free to design specific benefit packages and co-pay schedules, subject to the approval of the Maryland Insurance Administration. Participating individuals will be able to change plans during an annual open enrollment period.

Additionally, the plan reaches out to those without insurance coverage. Pipkin said that generally, the uninsured fall into three categories: those who are ineligible for coverage because they hold two part-time jobs or are between jobs, those who cannot afford coverage, and those who do not see the value in coverage - such as the young working segment of the population who are generally healthy. Pipkin’s plan addresses the various uninsured through a combination of offering tax credits, providing the money to purchase the insurance and allowing them the flexibility to structure less expensive plans to meet their individual health needs.

Individuals who obtain coverage through CHOICE will receive a State income tax credit up to \$500 per taxpayer or \$1,000 for the taxpayer and his or her dependents.

Pipkin asserted, “Our current structure for delivering health care is not working. We keep plodding on the same old way, while the number of uninsured Marylanders grows larger each year. Indeed, we have the best health care in the world. But we have the an ineffective system for delivering it to all our citizens. It is time to start thinking outside the box and try a different way to structure the delivery of health care to Marylanders, tailored to the individual health care needs of Marylanders.”