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FEDERAL HEALTH INSURANCE EXCHANGE REQUIRES STATE COOPERATION

(Baton Rouge - March 20, 2012) With the two-year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act this week, the Louisiana Budget Project has released a fact sheet reminding Louisiana legislators and other interested parties that several important policy decisions and milestones lie ahead as the state and federal government move to set up a new health insurance exchange.

This exchange will be a new, regulated marketplace where individuals and small businesses can comparison-shop for private health insurance. To make coverage more affordable, premium tax credits will be available for families with incomes up to four times the federal poverty level. As many as 350,000 Louisianans could get coverage through the exchange.

"A successful health insurance exchange will encourage competition among insurance providers and will provide high-quality, comprehensive coverage at affordable rates," said Jan Moller, director of the Louisiana Budget Project.

Last year, Louisiana became the first state to announce that it would not set up its own exchange, but would cede that responsibility to the federal government. However, even with the federal government in the lead, a successful exchange in Louisiana will require federal-state cooperation and public input.

"For Louisiana's families and small businesses to realize the benefits of the exchange, it must be designed correctly. An open and transparent process, strong stakeholder engagement, and close federal-state cooperation are all crucial ingredients for success," Moller said.

The Baton Rouge-based Louisiana Budget Project provides independent research and analysis of Louisiana fiscal issues and their impact on low and moderate income residents.

For a copy of the full report and more information on LBP, visit www.labudget.org and read "Health-Care Reform: Federal Health Insurance Exchange Requires State Cooperation."

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