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Oklahoma House of Representatives

Committees:

Public Health
Public Safety
Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee
on Public Health and Social Services

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Weekly Review

Bill to Reduce Oklahoma's Uninsured Goes to Governor

A comprehensive plan to provide Oklahomans with increased access to affordable, quality health care and private insurance is one step away from becoming law.

House Bill 2026 will, among other reforms, strengthen and promote the state's Insure Oklahoma program. The program, which has been a national model for several other states, is a successful public-private partnership that gives premium assistance to small business workers and employers.

The House passed the final version of the bill with a vote of 95-0 and it now moves to the governor for his signature.

The legislation is based on the work last interim in the bipartisan House Health Care Reform Task Force, whose members sought ways to reduce Oklahoma's high number of uninsured. The task force released a report that was unanimously endorsed by the Republican and Democrat members alike.

The plan is designed to improve Insure Oklahoma by offering more choices for coverage to eligible participants. It also authorizes the use of basic health plans with catastrophic coverage for people under 40 to help reduce costs and increase options for young people who fail to see the value in paying costly premiums for services not utilized.

In addition, HB 2026 establishes the Oklahoma Exchange, a website designed to assist, inform, and empower individuals seeking to enroll in an affordable insurance plan.

The comprehensive plan in HB 2026 includes:

- **Reform/improve Insure Oklahoma** - Insure Oklahoma is an effective public-private model for providing assistance to Oklahomans who meet certain eligibility requirements and are seeking health care coverage. The program can be improved by offering more choices. HB 2026 directs both the employer-sponsored insurance and individual insurance plans to offer additional low-cost options, such as high deductible plans compatible with health savings accounts. Also, Insure Oklahoma would be modified to be more customer-friendly, especially at the point of eligibility determination and enrollment.
- **Reform the Individual Market** – HB 2026 will enable insurance providers to offer basic preventative plans with catastrophic coverage by relaxing mandates so more low-cost choices can be offered to uninsured Oklahomans.

- **Establish the Oklahoma Exchange** – The plan builds upon the current infrastructure to provide a service to assist individuals seeking to enroll in an insurance plan that would best meet their needs.
- **Establish Enrollment Options at Point of Access** - In order to provide greater access to private health insurance and strengthen the marketplace for insurers, hospitals, physicians and other health care providers, cost-shifting must be reduced to moderate premiums. Under this model, the Oklahoma Exchange would be used to proactively connect individuals without health insurance to coverage options.

Legislation Enhancing Autism Provider Network Moves to Governor’s Desk

Legislation improving the provider network of autism specialists in Oklahoma is headed to the governor’s desk following House passage.

Senate Bill 135 mimics House Bill 2027, which originally passed the House unanimously. The bill calls for enactment of a licensing process for national Board Certified Behavior Analysts and enhancement of existing state programs that would train doctors to diagnose and treat autism.

During a legislative study conducted last year, lawmakers learned that a shortage of trained providers has made it difficult for families to obtain autism services, even when they have financial assistance.

When a recent state pilot program provided families over \$12,000 a year to obtain autism-related services, much of the money went unspent because there were not enough professionals trained to work with children with autism.

If signed into law, the bill would increase the number of trained specialists to treat autism spectrum disorders while allowing the open market to adjust coverage based on the demand of services.

The bill passed the House without a single ‘no’ vote and now moves to the governor for his signature into law.

Senate Bill 135 includes the following provisions:

- Establish a state license for national Board Certified Behavior Analysts and create a professional standard for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).
- Increase training for the evaluation and diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders.
- Enhance Sooner Start by providing professional training for the treatment of children with autism spectrum disorders. Sooner Start is an early intervention and treatment program for children with disabilities and developmental delays age birth to three.
- Secure funding for an ABA Research Project to provide supervision to college students seeking licensure, quantify the effects of applied behavior analysis and offer parental training and support.
- Provide intensive early intervention for more children by replicating Early Foundations. Early Foundations is an autism treatment and outreach model that offers behavior intervention through trained providers.

Database to Provide for Uninsured Motorist Crackdown Nears Completion

State officials are nearing completion of a new system that will allow police to instantly verify if a driver is uninsured, state lawmakers were told this week.

The House Administrative Rules and Agency Oversight Committee heard from officials with the Oklahoma Insurance Department and the Department of Public Safety today in a review of the implementation process for the online verification system.

Officials indicated most insurers are now providing the electronic data necessary to bring the system online.

Supporters believe implementation of an instant, online verification system is crucial to bringing down the number of uninsured drivers in Oklahoma, which will also lead to lower auto insurance rates.

As your pro-business Representative, I will always strive to reduce the burdens of government regulation on the Free enterprise system. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 1-800-522-8502.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rep. Mike Ritze". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "M".

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