

WNYT.com

Advocates warn NY lagging behind in transition to health care reform

Posted at: 05/11/2011 4:01 PM
Updated at: 05/12/2011 10:00 AM
By: Bill Lambdin



ALBANY - Advocates representing dozens of health care activist organizations complain New York is the only state with a Democratic governor that has done nothing to prepare for Health Care exchanges.

"So far for the state to actually have its act together in a year and a half, it has to make important decisions now or it stands to lose millions if not hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid to create an exchange," said Blair Horner of the American Cancer Society of New York and New Jersey.

The Health Care exchanges are a central part of reform designed to increase coverage for tens of millions of additional Americans.

They would gather information and coordinate choices for an estimated 500-thousand New Yorkers who would otherwise not have coverage.

Although the exchanges are not active until 2014 under the federal law, it's a new agency being built from scratch in each state.

That's why the timetable calls for enabling state legislation by the end of this year's legislative sessions.

In New York, that means there are 16 working days to consider and pass a law that hasn't even been introduced.

"We can't forget that the Affordable Care Act mandates that folks get health insurance," said Jessica Wisneski of Citizen Action of New York. "The exchange is also going to be the entity that decides who is exempt, who receives subsidies and it's going to be the place where so many people have to go to get their insurance coverage."