

Health care premiums may not be affordable

By Alex Wayne and Alex Nussbaum, Bloomberg

Health insurance under Obamacare will cost individuals at least \$2,988 a year on average, a price that Republican opponents may target as out-of-reach for many Americans who don't qualify for U.S. subsidies.

While the \$249 monthly payment is intended to be discounted through tax credits, less than half of people now buying insurance on their own may get that help. The release of the data by the Obama administration comes just six days before the Affordable Care Act's insurance exchanges open for enrollment, and a day after Ted Cruz, a Texas Republican, took the floor of the U.S. Senate to oppose the law.

The affordability of the overhaul has polarized debate since the act passed in 2010. While the law's cheapest plans offer more care than minimal policies available today, including guaranteed coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, their cost may persist as an issue even though it affects only a relatively small percentage of people.

The law's long-term success "will depend on the changes that are made over the next couple of years to address the affordability issue," said Brian Wright, an insurance analyst at Monness Crespi Hardt & Co. in New York. "If you have modifications that can help address those issues, then it will ultimately be successful. If not, then it's an open question."

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