

Covered California is 1st in U.S. to promise insurers help

By Catherine Ho, San Francisco Chronicle

Covered California, the health insurance exchange created under the Affordable Care Act, will take the unprecedented step of offering insurance companies financial incentives, and guardrails, to encourage them to continue selling health plans through its program.

The agency's board on Thursday approved a proposal to allow insurers to raise premiums more than normal between 2019 and 2021 if they lose more money than expected in 2018 due to federal policy changes, such as a lack of federal enforcement of the health law's individual mandate. This will allow insurers, in future years, to recoup losses they may see in 2018.

The move by Covered California is an aggressive tactic that has not been attempted by other states, said health policy experts. It signals that state officials are willing to take bold steps to ensure the exchange remains viable.

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