

## Maryland targeting 1,500 small businesses for health insurance subsidies

by *Business-Journal*

Gov. Martin O'Malley unveiled a partnership Monday between Maryland and insurance carriers to help make health insurance more affordable for small businesses.

The state plans to provide subsidies for 1,500 businesses a year. The coverage, for businesses with two to nine employees, is expected to begin by October and will cover up to 50 percent of the premiums paid on health insurance for workers making less than \$50,000 a year. The companies also need to implement a wellness initiative as part of the program.

Lawmakers approved the state subsidies last year and earmarked \$30 million to cover 20,000 individuals. But state leaders sliced the program's budget in half in April to help reduce spending and balance the state budget. The program will now only cover an estimated 10,000 individuals.

The small business health plans will be provided by CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield; Coventry Health Care; United HealthCare; and Aetna.

The carriers will work with the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Maryland Health Care Commission to enroll businesses in the program.

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