

## State looks for federal Medicaid waiver

By: Nathan Stubbs

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Now that the joint legislative committee on the budget has approved Gov. Bobby Jindal's Louisiana Health First initiative, the state is hoping to get swift approval for the plan from the Bush administration. Today, Congressman Charles Boustany sent out a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, urging him to grant the state a waiver on federal Medicaid rules that would allow for the proposed reforms. Boustany writes, "across the country, too many patients in Medicaid seek routine care in emergency rooms, which is more expensive and leads to lines, because they lack regular access to a physician. As a doctor, I treated many patients who struggled with the high costs of healthcare, and I am proud Louisiana is taking a lead to lower the cost both for patients and taxpayers."

The Louisiana Health First initiative seeks to reorganize the state's charity hospital system and revamp Medicaid funding by coordinating it through HMO-style private companies, similar to the system used in Florida. The nonprofit Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana recently issued its research brief on the issue, praising the objectives of the plan but also citing concern over its funding and implementation.