

[Back](#)

---

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## Harvard professor selected to oversee Vermont study

By DANIEL BARLOW Vermont Press Bureau

MONTPELIER – A Harvard professor who helped design Taiwan's health care system has been awarded a contract to design three models to remake Vermont's health care system.

The Legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee on Tuesday approved a contract of nearly \$300,000 to hire Dr. William Hsiao as the leader of an effort that could bring about dramatic changes to how Vermont handles health care.

That vote confirmed a decision Monday by the Health Care Reform Commission to hire Hsiao.

"I am very happy Dr. Hsiao and his team was selected," said Sen. Susan Bartlett, the Lamoille Democrat who chairs the committee. "He is the only expert who can do the job while keeping the political realities in mind."

Hsiao, who testified before the Vermont Legislature earlier this year, will lead an effort to design three new health care models — including a single-payer system and a public health insurance option — for the Green Mountain State.

Rep. Steve Maier, the Middlebury who chairs the House Health Care Committee, said the reform commission received bids from three people. The commission interviewed two of the bidders Monday morning before making a decision.

Maier said all the bids came in at or just slightly below the budgeted \$300,000. He said Hsiao's experience, vision and clarity put him at the front of the pack.

"We think all of the bidders would have done a good job," Maier said. "But Dr. Hsiao had a clarity in his responses that we liked."

Hsiao is a professor of economics at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Much of his research in recent years has focused on designing detailed models of health care, including how to finance these systems and payment systems for doctors and hospitals.

Sen. Doug Racine, the Chittenden County Democrat who chairs the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, led the charge to allocate the funds for the designs. Racine, a candidate for governor, has said the state needs to move away from debates over what kind of system it wants and focus on how these systems would actually work.

Hsiao is now scheduled to report back to lawmakers with the designs early in 2011.

daniel.barlow@rutland

herald.com

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