

# THE UTAH HEALTH POLICY PROJECT

## HEALTH MATTERS

Utah *Health Matters* for September 18, 2007

Hello Health Advocates & Friends!

1. [Business & Labor Interim Committee takes on health reform TOMORROW, Sept 19](#)
2. [HHS Interim to receive testimony about how the Health Insurance status quo works just Fine for all Utahns?](#)
3. [UHPP has submitted a \\$750K \(over 3 years\) Grant to Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support the "U-SHARE Covering Uninsured Collaborative"](#)
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1. **Business & Labor Interim takes on health reform Tomorrow, Sept. 19 (Interim Day) Room W125**

*10:20 AM The Legislature appropriated \$350,000 during the 2007 General Session to the GOED (Governor's Office of Economic Development) to develop a plan to increase the availability of health insurance to small business employees. The Committee will receive a report from GOED and other groups that have been working on proposals to expand health care coverage.*

- Jason Perry, Director, GOED
- John T. Nielsen, Director, Health Insurance Exchange, GOED
- Norm Thurston, Health Economist, Department of Health
- Natalie Gochour, Co-Chair, Health Care Working Group of the Financial Stability Council, United Way of Salt Lake
- A. Scott Anderson, Chair, Board of Directors, United Way of Salt Lake

UHPP comment: don't miss this. The committee will hear about the major reforms currently under development. Their response will have important implications for our strategy from this point forward. Business leaders and government leaders and advocates are forming a powerful consensus to embrace major health reforms designed to cover all or most of the uninsured and control health care costs. Now the question is: are the legislators on the same page? What are the hesitations? What we all should

2. **HHS Interim to receive testimony about how the Health Insurance status quo works just Fine for all Utahns? (Room W20 9:20 AM)**

HHS Interim will receive testimony from H. Luke McDermott, President of the Utah Association of Health Underwriters. We expect that Mr. McDermott is going to discuss the Underwriter's contention that the proposed reforms to cover uninsured in Utah are simply not needed. Mr. McDermott recently wrote on the UAHU website about the exchange, "I don't understand what is really broken in Utah because from personal experience I haven't had anybody that wasn't insurable."

Mr. McDermott just doesn't get it. How does he explain that statement to Utah's 442,000 uninsured and thousands more of us who are underinsured? How does he explain that to the thousands of Utah Small Businesses struggling to provide affordable and quality health coverage to their employees? It appears that the only folks who cannot see the obvious—the Health Insurance System is broken—is the Utah Association of Health Underwriters.

Mr. McDermott is going to suggest Utah does nothing to address the ever increasing number of uninsured in the State (currently 17.4%, up from 11.8% in 2000). That is unacceptable. 420,000 Utahns need help that Utah Association of Underwriters has consistently demonstrated they cannot provide.

If the Utah Health Insurance Exchange is done right, it could be just the help they need.

### **3. UHPP has submitted a \$750K (over 3 years) Grant to Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support the "U-SHARE Covering Uninsured Collaborative"**

A BIG THANKS to so many community and business leaders for stepping forward with wonderful letters of support and thoughtful input (and matching donations) on the grant itself! WE ARE HOPEFUL about our chances in what will be a very competitive selection process. We will know the result on December 17, 2007.

Whether we get the grant or not, we must continue to develop and fully fund the U-SHARE collaborative. Why? If you read the executive summary of the grant (below), you will see that there is no turning back on health system reform in Utah and yet so much is at stake. We find ourselves saying, THE TRAIN IS LEAVING THE STATION. Now our task is to make sure that the reforms are meaningful for all, including beneficiaries of public programs. If we can keep the reforms on a positive track (no small thing!), we will need to work hard together to counter the opposition. It's a tall order, but together we know we can be successful.

#### **Executive Summary of UHPP's Proposal to the RWJ Foundation**

*Utah is poised for statewide health system reform designed to expand access, control costs and improve quality. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Consumer Voices for Coverage program will strengthen Utah's advocacy system at a time when power brokers (legislative leadership, business leaders, providers, United Ways) are aligning with health care advocates to demand bold solutions to the crisis of the uninsured. The United Way has achieved consensus for bold reforms through its Financial Stability Council, a blue ribbon commission that includes the Utah Health Policy Project and other key players. One leading proposal is called the "Exchange." Modeled after the Massachusetts Connector, the Exchange is the proposed mechanism for facilitating access to affordable coverage and controlling costs. These and other*

*proposals make the most of Utah's strengths as a national leader in the alignment of treatment decisions and payment incentives with evidence-based medicine. To accelerate and build upon this momentum, the Utah Health Policy Project (UHPP) has joined forces with the Salt Lake Chamber (host of the local Chambers network), the United Ways of Utah, Voices for Utah Children, and others to form the U-SHARE (Utahns for Sustainable Health Reform) Collaborative. A key objective is to counter the naysayers with focused, collaborative advocacy efforts, strategic policy research, robust public communications, and effective organizing of consumer and business voices. UHPP has proven itself an adept facilitator of such efforts. U-SHARE brings together a powerful team of visionary leaders, policy experts, and specialists in civic engagement and strategic communications to design reforms that are meaningful for all segments of society—including beneficiaries of public programs. If there ever was a time to build stronger, more cohesive advocacy systems in Utah that time is now.*

We will post more items from the grant on our web site in the next few days.

#### **4. Important Dates Coming up for USHARE**

Save the date: October 17<sup>th</sup> Center on Budget & Policy Priorities will be here to help us develop a better waiver proposal to complement proposed health system reforms. Time and location are TBA.

Stay tuned for further announcements and key dates related to U-SHARE.

#### **5. Health Action Calendar**

Happenings in the Health Advocacy World can be found on the Utah Health Policy Project [HEALTH ACTION CALENDAR](#)

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