

# UTAH HEALTH POLICY PROJECT

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## **PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION FOR STATE-RUN EXCHANGE MEANS MUCH WORK TO DO**

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**Salt Lake City** – Today’s decision by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to grant conditional approval to Utah’s state-run benefit exchange is one step closer to full implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)—but many more steps are required to ensure that more Utahns will gain access to affordable and quality health care starting in 2014.

“Utah has been given a great opportunity—and a challenge—by the federal government to take our state-based health care reform to a real, meaningful level under the (ACA),” says Judi Hilman, executive director of the Utah Health Policy Project (UHPP). “But today’s conditional approval reminds us that much work remains to be done by both Governor Gary Herbert and the state legislature to create an ACA-compliant exchange for Utah,” she says. “We believe Utah’s current application for a state-based exchange falls short of the requirements for consumer assistance, transparent governance, and essential health benefits established by the ACA, and that today’s conditional approval should be viewed as cautionary progress as the state moves forward with its exchange.”

“Utah has been a pioneer in state-run health care reform, starting with its small business exchange—Avenue H—in 2009,” says Hilman. “But it’s a big step to go from providing health coverage to 7,000 small business employees to offering affordable health coverage to Utah’s 400,000 uninsured residents in less than a year. Consumers, advocates, and providers like UHPP are ready to assist the state in developing a strategy to reach Utah’s uninsured populations and we are encouraging the state to adopt a broader and more transparent governance structure in 2013.”

“Just because Utah has elected to place its exchange within a state government agency, does not mean that the exchange should not have a meaningful advisory process that engages consumer and small business perspectives,” adds Hilman. “Given the wide latitude HHS has allowed so far in approving Utah’s application, it will be up Utah’s consumer and small business stakeholders to make the case for better governance as the exchange is built.” As a result, UHPP is forming a new coalition to advocate for full implementation of the ACA standards for exchanges—starting and not ending with good governance and transparency around critical decisions. Stay tuned for further details or visit [www.healthpolicyproject.org](http://www.healthpolicyproject.org).

“If Utah’s leaders are serious about reforming health care to reduce costs, improve quality of care, and expand coverage to the state’s 400,000 uninsured residents, they need to set

politics aside and build a state-run exchange that can do the job,” says Jason Stevenson, education and communications director at UHPP. “Just because Utah has requested significant flexibility to design a state-run exchange doesn’t mean that Utah’s residents should be denied the protections mandated by the Affordable Care Act and offered by other states,” he adds.

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