



NEWS RELEASE

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While we were all busy this session, the real work starts today. Governor Huntsman will sign five bills that put Utah on the health reform path and present new data from the state's annual Health Status Survey. Both events take place today at 3:00 pm at a small business called Richter 7, 280 S 400 W, Suite 200 (Salt Lake City).

"With the number of uninsured Utahns rising, premiums increasing at 3 times the rate of wages, and small businesses having to reduce or cut benefits to stay in business, these efforts are very timely," explained Judi Hilman, Executive Director of the Health Policy Project. "It is up to all of us to make the most of these opportunities."

Rep. D. Clark and Sen. S. Killpack's HB133, Health System Reform, is the main vehicle for health system reform in Utah. Now all stakeholders, including advocates, consumers, the business community, providers, insurance companies and legislators and the Governor's staff, will begin the difficult task of figuring out what will work in Utah to contain costs, increase quality, and ensure that all Utahns have access to medically necessary health care. "We know that only by working together and building on our collective strengths can we realize great results. HB133 sets the framework for the difficult task ahead of us," said Elizabeth Garbe, Coverage Initiatives Director. See [UHPP's Recommendations for Health System Reform](#).

The other bills Governor Huntsman will sign begin that reform process now. HB47, Standards for Electronic Exchange of Clinical Health Information, sponsored by Rep. R. Menlove, authorizes the Department of Health to adopt standards for the electronic exchange of clinical health information. Information technology and electronic medical data exchange work to eliminate duplicative care, reduce medical errors, and increase efficiency by automating key steps in complex processes that fail when left to human memory. By facilitating rapid exchange of comprehensive medical data (like medical records), providers are better able to manage treatment of chronic diseases. Good information technology also provides ready access to a wealth of data gleaned from up-to-the-minute clinical science, thus reducing variations in practice. This bill will ensure that standards are set for this exchange and that providers and third party payers are following these standards. "Thanks to Rep. Menlove's bill, Utah will not only see an increase in overall quality and efficiency but realize long-term savings as well. In this scenario, everybody wins," says Hilman. See UHPP's [Recommendations for the Quality Component of Health System Reforms](#).

HB326, Children's Health Insurance Program—Open Enrolment and HB364, Promotion of

Health Care Coverage, sponsored by Speaker Curtis and Rep. K. Holdaway respectively help fulfill one of Government's key responsibilities within health reform: enrolling eligible Utahns in Medicaid, CHIP and the Utah Premium Partnership (UPP). Policymakers recognize that thousands of low income families cannot afford to purchase health coverage on their own. Unfortunately, many eligible families either do not know about these programs or, in the case of CHIP, the state has failed to provide sufficient funding to ensure the program is available—that is until now. HB326 and HB364 address both problems. HB326 ensures that Utah's CHIP program will never turn an eligible child in need of coverage away again by ensuring the program receives sufficient funding to cover all eligible children. HB364 addresses the under-enrollment issue by requiring schools to work with the Departments of Health and Workforce Services to develop a plan to promote CHIP, Medicaid and UPP to families. The bill also provides funding to market the Utah Premium Partnership or UPP program. UPP is a key program to help low income Utah families afford private health coverage by providing a subsidy for employees to purchase an employer's health insurance plan.

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UHPP can arrange interviews with uninsured/underinsured individuals, Medicaid, CHIP, and PCN enrollees or small business owners struggling to provide health insurance as a benefit to their employees. To make arrangements, call 433-2299.