



NEWS CO-RELEASE

Failure to Enact Health Reform Could Cripple Businesses, Middle-Class Families

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Salt Lake City- A new report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) gives us a glimpse of just how bad things could get if we don't take action to fix our broken health care system. The report shows that if health reform is not enacted within 10 years, the cost of health care for businesses could double and the number of uninsured Americans could reach 66 million – with middle-income families hardest hit. There would also be large growth in government insurance programs like Medicaid, major increases in health care spending by everyone, and more care that doctors and hospitals must provide without getting paid.

"Utah can't afford for our congressional delegation and their colleagues in Washington to get this wrong. The burden of rising health care costs must be lifted from the backs of small businesses so they can create or restore the jobs that will take Utah families to economic recovery. But small businesses can't play this role without immediate and significant relief from rising health care costs," says Elizabeth Garbe, UHPH Coverage Initiatives Director.

The RWJF report acknowledges that fixing our health care system won't be easy, that there will be substantial upfront costs. "But if we all work together—patients and doctors, businesses and government, Republicans and Democrats, states and the Federal government—we can build on what works in the current system and fix what's broken. That means reining in costs, focusing on quality care, and ensuring that all Utahns and all Americans have choices—in plans and in doctors—so they can decide what's best for them," adds Garbe.

The timing of this report could not be better for Utah, according to UHPH. Just yesterday, the Utah Legislature's Health Reform interim Committee began its second year of a 10-year reform process. "It's pleasing to see our Legislature's renewed commitment to state-based reform. But in that meeting yesterday and from our congressional delegation, we've heard a good bit of hostility towards the Federal reform process, that Utah should be left alone to find uniquely Utah solutions. The truth is that no state can handle these issues on its own. States *can* serve as laboratories for innovation, they should even be given flexibility to design parts of the reformed system; but the basic rules for private market behavior, minimum coverage and affordability standards, and other parameters must come from the national level. Thus reforms will work best as a partnership between the Federal government and the states," says UHPH Executive Director Judi Hilman. The RWJF report underscores the urgency for national reforms that complement and enhance the state reform process and vice versa.

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