

Utahns in the Coverage Gap Find Hope in Governor Herbert's Health Plan

Link: <http://kuer.org/post/utahns-coverage-gap-find-hope-governor-herbert-s-health-plan>

Audio: http://cpa.ds.npr.org/kuer/audio/2014/03/HealthyUtahFeedback_web.mp3

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By [Andrea Smardon](#)

14-year-old Avery Pizzuto asked the governor to "please get this going" so that her single mother would have access to health insurance.

Credit Andrea Smardon

Governor Gary Herbert got some positive feedback Thursday on his plan to offer health insurance to low-income Utahns. Herbert visited a homeless health clinic in Salt Lake City and heard from citizens who do not qualify for insurance subsidies, but also do not qualify for Medicaid, leaving them in a coverage gap.



The governor heard from a 14-year-old girl who wants her single mother earlier diagnosed with cervical cancer to have access to health insurance. He heard from a recovering I-V drug addict who was only able to get health coverage when she got pregnant with twins. And he heard from Stacey Davis Stanford, sitting in a wheelchair, since a car accident left her with a neurological disorder. As she describes it, her immune system is attacking her brain and her spine.

"With every single day passing, my brain is becoming more and more damaged, irreversibly," Stanford told the governor.

She said she could not stay in her job after the accident, and she is not able to afford treatment or even a proper diagnosis. She says she's been accepted as a student at Westminster College and she's started a new online retail business, but she is scared for her future.

"Receiving access to healthcare would change my life in every single way possible. It would enable me to truly make a difference in the world, like I so desperately want to. Thank you so much for your compassion and for your plan. I appreciate you, governor, more than you will ever know," Stanford said.

The governor responded, “thank you.”

Governor Herbert’s Healthy Utah Plan, which he unveiled last week, would use federal dollars in the form of a block grant to provide coverage to low-income adults like Stanford. A single person earning up to \$15,500 a year would qualify. Stanford says this is not the first time she’s talked to the governor, but this is the first time she’s felt like he’s listening.

“I’ve been working really hard on this for a year as well as so many others, and it’s really validating to know he’s been listening, and to know that he’s come up with a solution. As skeptical as I’ve been through the whole process, I’m very excited about it,” Stanford told KUER.

Before the governor left, a homeless advocate asked him how long people in the coverage gap would still have to wait. Herbert said he did not know. His plan still needs approval from the federal government. Members of the state legislature would also need to approve his plan, but are currently considering several other proposals. The governor’s staff told KUER the process could take months, possibly more than a year.

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