

In our opinion: Medicaid campaign supports gap coverage initiatives by bringing forward Utahn perspectives

Link: <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865604352/Medicaid-campaign-supports-gap-coverage-initiatives-by-bringing-forward-Utahn-perspectives.html>

Deseret News Editorial

Published: Tuesday, June 3 2014

Utahns' justifiable skepticism over the Affordable Care Act shouldn't keep policymakers from finding practical ways to help more than 50,000 of the state's poorest adults.

Gov. Gary Herbert's efforts to seek flexibility in crafting a Utah-based solution for Medicaid expansion needs to be encouraged. Utahns' justifiable skepticism over the Affordable Care Act shouldn't blind policymakers to practical solutions for the needs of more than 50,000 of the state's poorest adults.



On Tuesday, the nonprofit Utah Health Policy Project will launch a campaign to highlight the plight of those in need of coverage. The campaign begins with the screening of the film "Entitled to Life," a documentary about those who live within the coverage gap. These individuals lack access to affordable health insurance because they earn too little to purchase subsidized insurance, but too much to receive Medicaid. According to UHPP, 66 percent of the individuals caught in the gap are currently working one or more jobs.

Film director Paul Gibbs himself lived within this gap. Gibbs was diagnosed with kidney failure and required two surgeries costing \$79,000 each. At the time, he was working part time, going to school part time and working as a caregiver for his family. "I was stuck in a difficult situation where I needed the transplant to survive, but I couldn't get it without health insurance," Gibbs told the Deseret News. In addition to receiving funds from friends, he eventually enrolled in Medicaid, his only avenue for coverage.

RyLee Curtis, a Medicaid policy analyst for UHPP, said that she was hopeful for progress for Herbert's "Healthy Utah" plan. According to a Utah Voter Poll conducted by the Center for the

Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU in April, 76 percent of Utah voters support using federal funds to close the gap. State lawmakers need to be as concerned about this as their constituents.