

## Woman who says she was denied Medicaid testifies before lawmakers

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(KUTV) Utah Gov. Herbert's plan to use federal money to cover more people on Medicaid still is not certain, but a woman who said she was denied coverage through the program after a cancer diagnosis, made an impassioned plea before lawmakers to make some sort of expansion happen.

"When I was trying to get on Medicaid, I was told I simply made too much," said Charlotte Lawrence, a single mother of four,

who claimed she lived on child support payments from an ex-husband and from income her teenage kids made on part-time jobs. "When I asked 'what do I do,' she (Medicaid worker) said, 'Well sweetie, people die of cancer every day.'"

Lawrence's testimony before the Utah Legislature's Health Reform Task Force came amid discussion at the Capitol on Medicaid expansion options.

Since her diagnosis in 2012, she said friends raised money for surgery and she has worked two jobs including one that offers medical insurance. She said the plan is costly and that she hasn't been able to afford a check-up with her oncologist for nearly a year.

"I bleed for her problem," said Sen. Allen Christensen, R-North Ogden. "She has a tremendous load to carry."

Christensen, the task force chair, said while the governor's proposal is the best of any expansion options, he is still opposed to additional Medicaid coverage.

"As a government official, I can't tell you that you have to be charitable and you have to give up

your hard-earned money for someone else's problems," he said. "I do have a heart. It does touch my soul, but I do have to draw the line on dictating who is going to provide that care."

For many, it may be understood that federal money is already being collected, is already on the table for the states to use in broadening Medicaid, and if they don't take advantage---then the people of the state lose.

Christensen, a retired pediatric dentist, said an expansion here would come with "a lot of strings attached."

"Be careful where you bite the cheese; there's a hook inside of it," he said. "It's not free. We're going to be on the hook for tens of millions of dollars of state money in addition to what the feds are paying."

By Brian Mullahy

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