



NEWS RELEASE and PRESS STATEMENT

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In firing Fletcher, Hiring Walsh-McDonald, Gov. Herbert may have found his footing on Path to Recovery from Data Breach

Salt Lake City—Today Governor Herbert made two important announcements on the data breach: he asked Stephen Fletcher, the Director of the Department of Technology Services to resign and he hired longtime low-income advocate Sheila Walsh-McDonald to head a new “Office of the Data Breach Ombudsman.” The Governor said he takes the issue very personally and views the breach of nearly 800,000 people’s personal information as a “direct result of neglected responsibilities.” Mark VanOrden has been named Interim Director of D.T.S. This position will not be filled until the state completes a comprehensive security audit now underway.

As head of the new Ombudsman Office, Ms. Walsh-McDonald will oversee three areas of breach management: 1) Case management and calls for assistance 2) Credit counseling 3) Community outreach and engagement. “Today is a day of hope, not only for the breach victims but for the families out there who might be thinking twice about applying for benefits or interacting with the health care system in light of the breach,” says Randal Serr, Take Care Utah (UHPP’s consumer health assistance program) Director at UHPP.

“The Department of Health – and the Governor who gave DOH its marching orders—deserve a lot of credit for their response to the immediate crisis of the data theft in late March. But we need the same sense of urgency in tackling the next crisis which may be already unfolding,” said Jason Cooke, UHPP’s Medicaid Policy and Research Director.” “At this moment, Utahns may be weighing decisions that could adversely affect their health, that of their families, and the larger health care system our communities have worked so hard to build,” Cooke added. “Families already enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP may be wondering whether they should stay enrolled in the wake of the data breach. Others see their renewal dates approaching and may be asking themselves the same question. And families who are not enrolled, but may be eligible are questioning whether their personal information will be secure if they do qualify.”

“Utahns are asking those questions now and the state of Utah needs to answer them today with an aggressive (and adequately funded) outreach and marketing campaign,” Cooke said. “Utah can’t afford to add these families to the ranks of the uninsured. “No one is better equipped to drill down into these critical issues than Sheila Walsh-McDonald,” says Judi Hilman, E.D. at UHPP, “but she will need adequate resources to get that job done.

At the press conference Gov. Herbert stated that the breach can be handled without an additional appropriation. “With all due respect to the Governor, there’s just no way to know that yet, added

Hilman. “The Ombudsman’s office needs time and resources to gather data and take input from the community about whether the breach is having a dampening effect on families’ willingness to apply for or use their benefits.” “Anecdotally, UHPP is hearing that the breach may be adding to the tremendous stigma surrounding Medicaid and related institutional and bureaucratic barriers to eligibility. “We’d prefer to sort this out all at once, and if anyone is up to that task, it’s Sheila,” added Hilman.

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