



*Utahns*

**SPEAK UP**



## **Small Business Owner Has a Hard Time Providing Insurance through Utah's Health Exchange**

Shannon Terwedo is the president of two outpatient addiction treatment centers, one in Salt Lake City and one in Ogden. Hiring qualified medical personnel requires competing with hospitals and other medical offices. Shannon says being able to offer health insurance is critical to attract and keep good employees. However, Shannon says her experience trying to get reasonably priced insurance through Utah's Health Exchange was a "nightmare."

Shannon shared her concerns about Utah's Health Exchange. "I was surprised to find out that the exchange doesn't pool risk across all enrolled employees. I was hoping to gain the purchasing power of a large group, but instead ran into the same high prices I've found in traditional insurance market."

In addition, Shannon found it difficult to meet the 75 percent employee participation requirement. At each location four employees were considered eligible, which meant that three (at each) had to agree to buy insurance through the exchange. At the Ogden site only two of the employees could afford the premium price, so all four were left without insurance. At the Salt Lake City location three of the four employees wanted to purchase insurance and found plans through the exchange, but one of them was mistakenly enrolled in a more expensive plan that she couldn't afford. The insurance broker working with Shannon said that the employee was stuck with the expensive plan for the rest of the year.

In addition, Shannon found that the UHE had made unauthorized withdraws from her business account to cover premiums on all of her employees, most of which were not purchasing insurance through the Utah Health Exchange. Shannon dropped coverage for her employees after one month, "The exchange is a nice concept, but it's not affordable and doesn't seem to be addressing the needs of small businesses."

### **Bring Utah's Health Exchange (UHE) into federal compliance:**

- Include consumer input into UHE decision making so that business owners like Shannon can have a voice and to ensure transparency of Utah's Health Exchange.
- Allow small businesses to pool risk and purchasing power in order to access more affordable coverage options.
- Certify insurance policies sold on the UHE as Qualified Health Plans organized by benefit package so that consumers can make prudent choices based on easy to use information.