

Supporters of Herbert's health plan hold vigil

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SALT LAKE CITY

About 100 people rallied in Salt Lake City to urge the Legislature to pass Gov. Gary Herbert's alternative plan to Medicaid expansion.

Holding lights and candles Saturday night on the steps of the Capitol, they observed a moment of silence for those who died because they couldn't afford medical care.

Utah filmmaker Paul Gibbs, who organized the vigil, said it's time for state legislators to stop playing political games with people's lives.

He showed a clip from his documentary film, "Entitled to Life," which tells the stories of people suffering because they can't get access to health care, The Deseret News reported (<http://bit.ly/1qW6QRZ>).

"We need to get this done. People are dying," Gibbs said. "This should not be a partisan issue. No one party should have a monopoly on common human decency."

Dubbed Healthy Utah, Herbert's proposal is an alternative to simply expanding the existing government program, which is an option under President Barack Obama's health care law.

Herbert, a Republican, is seeking a chunk of federal money for a three-year pilot program to pay for about 110,000 low-income people to buy private health insurance. Utah's Department



of Health estimates the program would use \$250 million in federal money the first year and grow to about \$280 million in the third year.

But some state lawmakers say participants should be required to work, which federal officials won't allow.

Herbert's plan still needs approval from the federal government and the Republican-controlled Utah Legislature.

Dr. David Sundwall, a public health professor at the University of Utah School of Medicine and former state health department director, said Herbert's plan isn't perfect but is a step in the right direction. He urged legislators to approve it.

"It's a matter of fairness as far as I'm concerned. It's the humane thing to do," said Sundwall, a Republican.

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