

Task force votes not to recommend Gov. Herbert's Healthy Utah plan

December 18, 2014

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By Ashton Edwards and Tamara Vaifanua,



SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah legislature’s Health Reform task force voted not to recommend Gov. Herbert’s Healthy Utah plan Thursday.

Instead, it suggested some of its own solutions on how to cover the approximately 50,000 Utahns who are uninsured and fall in the Medicare coverage gap.

Gov. Herbert’s Healthy Utah plan pays the premium for employer-provided insurance or for private insurance on the state exchange.

Some Republican leaders voiced concerns about long-term costs and worry the federal government may not make good on its promise to pay 90 percent of the cost.

Lawmakers explained three other options Thursday which would basically cover the medically frail.

However, critics argue those proposals would cover fewer people, leaving many of the vulnerable with no coverage.

Rep. Dean Sanpei (R- Provo) said, “We can move forward and do more on it in the future without detrimentally impacting options in the future, I think that becomes attractive. I like option one and two for that very reason.”

“The Utah Health Policy project is going to support the plan that draws down the full federal funds,” RyLee Curtis with the Utah Health Policy project said. “It’s going to cover the maximum amount of Utahns with the benefit that is good for the consumer.”

Isaac Holyoak, Communications Director for the Alliance For a Better Utah, said the move is of great concern.

He said: “The concern here is if Governor Herbert has a hard time getting this small group of legislators to corral them to supporting him, how’s he going to corral 104 legislators to support his plan?”

Without this plan, tens of thousands of Utahns who fall into the so-called “income gap” won’t be able to get health insurance.

“All those people right in the middle, they don’t have access to subsidies because they don’t make enough money yet they’re not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid,” Holyoak said.

Michelle Segura is currently uninsured, and she said she’s disappointed by the task force’s decision.

“That’s what I was hoping for,” she said. “That’s what I was planning on. That’s why I waited. I was waiting for them to do their work so I could sign up for it really to be honest with ya.”

Marty Carpenter, a spokesman for Gov. Herbert’s office, released a statement following the task force’s decision, which is available in its entirety below.

“Gov. Herbert disagrees with the position taken by the Legislative Health Reform Task Force to support two proposals that cost the Utah taxpayer more money per person covered, while covering far fewer people than the Healthy Utah plan would, all while leaving hundreds of millions of Utah taxpayer dollars in Washington, D.C. This is a non-binding vote and the governor fully expects the Healthy Utah plan to be debated by the full Legislature while providing the opportunity for public input. He will continue to work with legislators to that end.”

The debate continues; officials plan to meet next year before the legislative session. Lawmakers could still consider the bill during the January session.