

Amid disbelief, frustration, supporters of Healthy Utah plan try to revive efforts

KUTV (Dan Rascon)
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Link: <http://www.kutv.com/news/features/top-stories/stories/Amid-disbelief-frustration-supporters-of-Healthy-Utah-plan-try-to-revive-efforts-91418.shtml#.VPAT-C4haPU>

Video: <http://www.kutv.com/news/features/top-stories/stories/Amid-disbelief-frustration-supporters-of-Healthy-Utah-plan-try-to-revive-efforts-91418.shtml#.VPAT-C4haPU>



(KUTV) Anger, frustration, and disbelief after Utah's Speaker of the House tosses out the Healthy Utah bill before it's even debated on the House floor.

The bill would provide health insurance to tens of thousands of low income families who are caught in the health care "gap" at a cost of \$25 million per year. These are

families who don't qualify for Medicaid and the subsidized health insurance under the Affordable Care Act known as Obamacare.

Gov. Gary Herbert, who unveiled this plan back in December says it just doesn't make sense that lawmakers would not at least debate the issue.

"We've got 11 days to do this. Let's not short change the public by limiting discussion in debate. We look at every opportunity we have to get to the right place," said Herbert. "There is probably nothing more important on the table to discuss than this issue."

"It's absolutely ridiculous," said Maryann Martindale the Executive Director for Alliance for a Better Utah. "We have tens of thousands of Utahns who have been waiting for this kind of coverage."

She was joined by several other women at the capitol who represent programs to help low income families. The women were all sitting around a table strategizing how they are going to try and get this back on the house floor to be debated.

"I think the message we want to convey is that Healthy Utah is not dead," said RyLee Curtis with the Utah Health Policy Project. "It's about people's lives."

According to House Speaker Greg Hughes, Republican representatives just don't support it because of the cost to the state and how it's connected to Obamacare. He believes it would be a waste of time to debate the issue.

"If we are not in this to pass bills what are we in this for? This isn't pageantry you have to have some chance to get the votes needed to make it law," he said.

At University of Utah Hospital they are required to help anyone who walks into the emergency room whether they have health care or not. As a result of that, administrators say this bill would save the people of Utah tens of millions of dollars in health care cost.

"We are extremely disappointed," said University of Utah Hospital CEO David Entwistle.

"Last year just in the university system, we spent \$100 million in care that was not compensated. Those costs get passed along to businesses."

The governor says he's looking at other options to keep the bill alive and interest groups are lobbying to get lawmakers to put the bill back on the table.

The legislative session ends at midnight on March 12.