

Healthcare Plan Dies in House GOP Caucus Meeting

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Link: <http://kuer.org/post/healthcare-plan-dies-house-gop-caucus-meeting>

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This plan was the product of negotiations between the governor's office and leaders in the House and Senate, a group known as the Gang of 6. It was supposed to resolve concerns that House Republicans had with the governor's Healthy Utah Plan about containing the state's enrollment growth and costs. The most controversial piece of the new plan was a tax on doctors and healthcare providers in order to help pay for a Medicaid expansion. House Speaker Greg Hughes says lawmakers heard from those providers that they were not willing to accept an unlimited fee.

"Healthcare providers ultimately said those were risks that they were not willing to accept. They said it was untenable; it was a risk too great to take," Hughes says. "I think that brings you pause as lawmakers."

That may explain why only 7 out of 63 House Republicans voted in favor of the plan. That's even less support than the Governor's Healthy Utah Plan had in the last legislative session. Aimee Edwards, spokeswoman for Gov. Gary Herbert said in a statement, "The House of Representatives defeated Healthy Utah and continues to push back against other proposals, even those crafted by their own legislative leadership. The poorest among us will continue to struggle until Utah leaders can find agreement on this difficult issue."

Democratic Senator Jim Dabakis called the process disgraceful.

"They've been dithering for two and half years," Dabakis says. "We have turned down hundreds of millions of dollars. People have been dying while the Republican caucus sits in a backroom unable to come to a compromise among themselves."

"I kind of have no hope for it anyways," says Kylie Toponce from Kaysville. She just recently filed for bankruptcy because she can't pay her medical bills.



Utah House Speaker Greg Hughes and House Majority Leader Jim Dunnigan speak to the media after a three-hour closed-door caucus meeting, in which members rejected their plan for Medicaid expansion.

She has a chronic illness and is one of tens of thousands of Utahns caught in the coverage gap. “No 23 year-old should have to file for bankruptcy for medical bills. I’ve never had a credit card, and I feel like the fact that we’re in a state where that can happen, nothing’s going to change.”

Speaker Greg Hughes acknowledges that the problem is not going away, and he insists there is political will in the state to help the neediest Utahns.