

Democrats Not Giving Up on Full Medicaid Expansion in Utah

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By [ANDREA SMARDON](#)

After several years of debate, the Utah legislature has approved a partial Medicaid expansion, but Democratic lawmakers say they're not done with this issue yet.

Not a single Democrat voted in favor of the GOP proposal to expand Medicaid to an

estimated 16,000 Utahns. Senator Gene Davis says they will keep fighting for thousands of Utahns still left in the coverage gap, and for millions of federal dollars that Utahns have already paid in taxes.

"We will bring this back again next year," Davis says. "We'll bring it back until we get full Medicaid coverage for all citizens, or healthcare coverage... for all citizens in the state of Utah."

Republican Senator Brian Shiozawa says he would have preferred Governor Gary Herbert's Healthy Utah plan, but he views the legislation approved by the body as a good first step. He says he may be back next year with a proposal to expand the number of people covered.

"Realistically, it will be an off election-cycle year, and so a lot of people who are concerned about the ramifications it might have with certain voter groups will be less worried about that...maybe looking at what is really good, sound policy," Shiozawa says.



Utah Health Policy Project Analyst RyLee Curtis says they're calling this partial Medicaid expansion a "win", but they're not going to stop putting pressure on lawmakers.

"There's still 43,000 Utahns who are living below the poverty level without access to comprehensive affordable healthcare coverage, and there is no way they're going to stop coming up here and sharing their stories," Curtis says. "We're going to be up here too, advocating on their behalf."

The bill only needs Governor Gary Herbert's signature to become law. The governor has already said he will support it because it's better than doing nothing.