

Utah House Passes SB96

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SALT LAKE— The Utah State House of Representatives just passed SB 96, Senator Allen Christensen's Proposition 3 Medicaid expansion bill with a vote of 56 to 19. It will now move on to the Senate for a vote on Monday, and to the Governor's desk shortly thereafter.

Changes to the bill were made on the floor during a lot of intense debate and public outcry in the Capitol. Revisions were made to do the following:

- Implement Medicaid expansion to 100% of the federal poverty level as soon as possible with a federal match rate of 70%/30%
- Apply for an 1115 waiver for a work reporting requirement
- Apply for an 1115 waiver to enhance that match rate to 90%/10%
- In January 2020, if the enhanced match rate waiver is not approved, then HB210 (Rep. Ray Ward's bill) will be implemented and Utah will expand to 138%
- BUT, Utah will also seek additional waivers to control costs by: reducing certain optional services and cutting up to 10% of certain agency appropriations

Although, it is disappointing that the will of the people has been relegated to a backup plan, and Medicaid expansion was not achieved in the way we intended through Proposition 3-- we recognize that our advocacy over the years has completely changed the conversation around expanding healthcare.

This fight for Medicaid expansion has been no small feat and we cannot express the gratitude we feel to all of the people who have tried to end the coverage gap in Utah.

We feel some hope with SB96, as it was revised today with a backup plan that includes a full Medicaid expansion to 138% of the federal poverty level. Additionally, we are hopeful, that with the passing of this bill, Utah is making its first big strides to cover the expansion population. This would not have happened had it not been for 6 years of work, including a successful ballot initiative.

The work is not done and we will continue to fight bad policies like work reporting requirements. However, we are glad to see progress towards covering more Utahns, even if it wasn't done through Proposition 3.

Matt Slonaker, executive director at Utah Health Policy Project responded to the vote, "SB96, after many revisions, does attempt to close the coverage gap and more people will be able to get care later this year. We plan to hold elected officials' feet to the fire to uphold their commitment to April 1, 2019. UHPP, through its Take Care Utah outreach and enrollment

program, will start working immediately to reach this population and enroll them in Medicaid benefits that will come soon."

Stacy Stanford, health policy analyst at UHPP added, "This has been a long battle, with many ups and downs over the years. Today's vote is simultaneously a painful loss, and a step forward toward finally putting Medicaid expansion into action and getting low income people the healthcare they need. We will not stop fighting for expanded access to care, and against harmful cuts, caps, and red tape."

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